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THE WORKS

OF

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

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THE WORKS OF

ALFRED

LORD TENNYSON

VOL. V

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TIRESIAS AND OTHER POEMS.

TIRESIAS AND OTHER POEMS.

TO E. FITZGERALD.

OLD FITZ who from your suburb grange,
Where once I tarried for a while,
Glance at the wheeling Orb of change,
And greet it with a kindly smile;
Whom yet I see as there you sit
Beneath your sheltering garden-tree,
And while your doves about you flit,
And plant on shoulder, hand and knee,
Or on your head their rosy feet,
As if they knew your diet spares
Whatever moved in that full sheet
Let down to Peter at his prayers;
Who live on milk and meal and grass;
And once for ten long weeks I tried
Your table of Pythagoras,
And seem'd at first 'a thing enskied'
(As Shakespeare has it) airy-light
To float above the ways of men,
Then fell from that half-spiritual height

Chill'd, till I tasted flesh again
One night when earth was winter-black,
And all the heavens flash'd in frost;
And on me, half-asleep, came back
That wholesome heat the blood had lost,
And set me climbing icy capes
And glaciers, over which there roll'd
To meet me long-arm'd vines with grapes
Of Eshcol hugeness; for the cold
Without, and warmth within me, wrought
To mould the dream; but none can say
That Lenten fare makes Lenten thought,
Who reads your golden Eastern lay,
Than which I know no version done
In English more divinely well;
A planet equal to the sun
Which cast it, that large infidel
Your Omar; and your Omar drew
Full-handed plaudits from our best
In modern letters, and from two,
Old friends outvaluing all the rest,
Two voices heard on earth no more;
But we old friends are still alive,
And I am nearing seventy-four,
While you have touch'd at seventy-five,
And so I send a birthday line
Of greeting; and my son, who dipt

In some forgotten book of mine
With sallow scraps of manuscript,
And dating many a year ago,
Has hit on this, which you will take
My Fitz, and welcome, as I know
Less for its own than for the sake
Of one recalling gracious times,
When, in our younger London days,
You found some merit in my rhymes,
And I more pleasure in your praise.

TIRESIAS.

I WISH I were as in the years of old,
While yet the blessed daylight made itself
Ruddy thro' both the roofs of sight, and woke
These eyes, now dull, but then so keen to seek
The meanings ambush'd under all they saw,
The flight of birds, the flame of sacrifice,
What omens may foreshadow fate to man
And woman, and the secret of the Gods.

My son, the Gods, despite of human prayer,
Are slower to forgive than human kings.
The great God, Arês, burns in anger still
Against the guiltless heirs of him from Tyre,
Our Cadmus, out of whom thou art, who found
Beside the springs of Dircê, smote, and still'd
Thro' all its folds the multitudinous beast,
The dragon, which our trembling fathers call'd
The God's own son.

A tale, that told to me,
When but thine age, by age as winter-white
As mine is now, amazed, but made me yearn

For larger glimpses of that more than man
Which rolls the heavens, and lifts, and lays the deep,
Yet loves and hates with mortal hates and loves,
And moves unseen among the ways of men.

Then, in my wanderings all the lands that lie
Subjected to the Heliconian ridge
Have heard this footstep fall, altho' my wont
Was more to scale the highest of the heights
With some strange hope to see the nearer God.

One naked peak—the sister of the sun
Would climb from out the dark, and linger there
To silver all the valleys with her shafts—
There once, but long ago, five-fold thy term
Of years, I lay; the winds were dead for heat;
The noonday crag made the hand burn; and sick
For shadow—not one bush was near—I rose
Following a torrent till its myriad falls
Found silence in the hollows underneath.

There in a secret olive-glade I saw
Pallas Athene climbing from the bath
In anger; yet one glittering foot disturb'd
The lucid well; one snowy knee was prest
Against the margin flowers; a dreadful light
Came from her golden hair, her golden helm
And all her golden armour on the grass,
And from her virgin breast, and virgin eyes
Remaining fixt on mine, till mine grew dark

For ever, and I heard a voice that said
'Henceforth be blind, for thou hast seen too much,
And speak the truth that no man may believe.'
  Son, in the hidden world of sight, that lives
Behind this darkness, I behold her still,
Beyond all work of those who carve the stone,
Beyond all dreams of Godlike womanhood,
Ineffable beauty, out of whom, at a glance,
And as it were, perforce, upon me flash'd
The power of prophesying—but to me
No power—so chain'd and coupled with the curse
Of blindness and their unbelief, who heard
And heard not, when I spake of famine, plague,
Shrine-shattering earthquake, fire, flood, thunder-
    bolt,
And angers of the Gods for evil done
And expiation lack'd—no power on Fate,
Theirs, or mine own! for when the crowd would roar
For blood, for war, whose issue was their doom,
To cast wise words among the multitude
Was flinging fruit to lions; nor, in hours
Of civil outbreak, when I knew the twain
Would each waste each, and bring on both the yoke
Of stronger states, was mine the voice to curb
The madness of our cities and their kings.
  Whoever turn'd upon his heel to hear
My warning that the tyranny of one

Was prelude to the tyranny of all?
My counsel that the tyranny of all
Led backward to the tyranny of one?
  This power hath work'd no good to aught that lives,
And these blind hands were useless in their wars.
O therefore that the unfulfill'd desire,
The grief for ever born from griefs to be,
The boundless yearning of the Prophet's heart—
Could *that* stand forth, and like a statue, rear'd
To some great citizen, win all praise from all
Who past it, saying, 'That was he!'
                In vain!
Virtue must shape itself in deed, and those
Whom weakness or necessity have cramp'd
Within themselves, immerging, each, his urn
In his own well, draw solace as he may.
  Menœceus, thou hast eyes, and I can hear
Too plainly what full tides of onset sap
Our seven high gates, and what a weight of war
Rides on those ringing axles! jingle of bits,
Shouts, arrows, tramp of the hornfooted horse
That grind the glebe to powder! Stony showers
Of that ear-stunning hail of Arês crash
Along the sounding walls. Above, below,
Shock after shock, the song-built towers and gates
Reel, bruised and butted with the shuddering
War-thunder of iron rams; and from within

The city comes a murmur void of joy,
Lest she be taken captive—maidens, wives,
And mothers with their babblers of the dawn,
And oldest age in shadow from the night,
Falling about their shrines before their Gods,
And wailing 'Save us.'

And they wail to thee!

These eyeless eyes, that cannot see thine own,
See this, that only in thy virtue lies
The saving of our Thebes; for, yesternight,
To me, the great God Arês, whose one bliss
Is war, and human sacrifice—himself
Blood-red from battle, spear and helmet tipt
With stormy light as on a mast at sea,
Stood out before a darkness, crying 'Thebes,
Thy Thebes shall fall and perish, for I loathe
The seed of Cadmus—yet if one of these
By his own hand—if one of these——'

My son,

No sound is breathed so potent to coerce,
And to conciliate, as their names who dare
For that sweet mother land which gave them birth
Nobly to do, nobly to die. Their names,
Graven on memorial columns, are a song
Heard in the future; few, but more than wall
And rampart, their examples reach a hand
Far thro' all years, and everywhere they meet

And kindle generous purpose, and the strength
To mould it into action pure as theirs.
  Fairer thy fate than mine, if life's best end
Be to end well! and thou refusing this,
Unvenerable will thy memory be
While men shall move the lips: but if thou dare—
Thou, one of these, the race of Cadmus—then
No stone is fitted in yon marble girth
Whose echo shall not tongue thy glorious doom,
Nor in this pavement but shall ring thy name
To every hoof that clangs it, and the springs
Of Dircê laving yonder battle-plain,
Heard from the roofs by night, will murmur thee
To thine own Thebes, while Thebes thro' thee shall
    stand
Firm-based with all her Gods.
                The Dragons' cave
Half hid, they tell me, now in flowing vines—
Where once he dwelt and whence he roll'd himself
At dead of night—thou knowest, and that smooth rock
Before it, altar-fashion'd, where of late
The woman-breasted Sphinx, with wings drawn back,
Folded her lion paws, and look'd to Thebes.
There blanch the bones of whom she slew, and these
Mixt with her own, because the fierce beast found
A wiser than herself, and dash'd herself
Dead in her rage: but thou art wise enough,

Tho' young, to love thy wiser, blunt the curse
Of Pallas, hear, and tho' I speak the truth
Believe I speak it, let thine own hand strike
Thy youthful pulses into rest and quench
The red God's anger, fearing not to plunge
Thy torch of life in darkness, rather—thou
Rejoicing that the sun, the moon, the stars
Send no such light upon the ways of men
As one great deed.
Thither, my son, and there
Thou, that hast never known the embrace of love,
Offer thy maiden life.
This useless hand!
I felt one warm tear fall upon it. Gone!
He will achieve his greatness.
But for me,
I would that I were gather'd to my rest,
And mingled with the famous kings of old,
On whom about their ocean-islets flash
The faces of the Gods—the wise man's word,
Here trampled by the populace underfoot,
There crown'd with worship—and these eyes will find
The men I knew, and watch the chariot whirl
About the goal again, and hunters race
The shadowy lion, and the warrior-kings,
In height and prowess more than human, strive
Again for glory, while the golden lyre

Is ever sounding in heroic ears
Heroic hymns, and every way the vales
Wind, clouded with the grateful incense-fume
Of those who mix all odour to the Gods
On one far height in one far-shining fire.

'ONE height and one far-shining fire'
  And while I fancied that my friend
For this brief idyll would require
  A less diffuse and opulent end,
And would defend his judgment well,
  If I should deem it over nice—
The tolling of his funeral bell
  Broke on my Pagan Paradise,
And mixt the dream of classic times
  And all the phantoms of the dream,
With present grief, and made the rhymes,
  That miss'd his living welcome, seem
Like would-be guests an hour too late,
  Who down the highway moving on
With easy laughter find the gate
  Is bolted, and the master gone.
Gone into darkness, that full light
  Of friendship! past, in sleep, away
By night, into the deeper night!

The deeper night? A clearer day
Than our poor twilight dawn on earth—
If night, what barren toil to be!
What life, so maim'd by night, were worth
Our living out? Not mine to me
Remembering all the golden hours
Now silent, and so many dead,
And him the last; and laying flowers,
This wreath, above his honour'd head,
And praying that, when I from hence
Shall fade with him into the unknown,
My close of earth's experience
May prove as peaceful as his own.

THE WRECK.

I.

HIDE me, Mother! my Fathers belong'd to the church of old,
I am driven by storm and sin and death to the ancient fold,
I cling to the Catholic Cross once more, to the Faith that saves,
My brain is full of the crash of wrecks, and the roar of waves,
My life itself is a wreck, I have sullied a noble name,
I am flung from the rushing tide of the world as a waif of shame,
I am roused by the wail of a child, and awake to a livid light,
And a ghastlier face than ever has haunted a grave by night,
I would hide from the storm without, I would flee from the storm within,
I would make my life one prayer for a soul that died in his sin,

I was the tempter, Mother, and mine was the deeper fall;
I will sit at your feet, I will hide my face, I will tell you all.

II.

He that they gave me to, Mother, a heedless and innocent bride—
I never have wrong'd his heart, I have only wounded his pride—
Spain in his blood and the Jew——dark-visaged, stately and tall—
A princelier-looking man never stept thro' a Prince's hall.
And who, when his anger was kindled, would venture to give him the nay?
And a man men fear is a man to be loved by the women they say.
And I could have loved him too, if the blossom can doat on the blight,
Or the young green leaf rejoice in the frost that sears it at night;
He would open the books that I prized, and toss them away with a yawn,
Repell'd by the magnet of Art to the which my nature was drawn,

The word of the Poet by whom the deeps of the world
are stirr'd,
The music that robes it in language beneath and be-
yond the word!
My Shelley would fall from my hands when he cast a
contemptuous glance
From where he was poring over his Tables of Trade
and Finance;
My hands, when I heard him coming would drop
from the chords or the keys,
But ever I fail'd to please him, however I strove to
please—
All day long far-off in the cloud of the city, and there
Lost, head and heart, in the chances of dividend,
consol, and share—
And at home if I sought for a kindly caress, being
woman and weak,
His formal kiss fell chill as a flake of snow on the
cheek:
And so, when I bore him a girl, when I held it aloft
in my joy,
He look'd at it coldly, and said to me 'Pity it isn't a
boy.'
The one thing given me, to love and to live for,
glanced at in scorn!
The child that I felt I could die for—as if she were
basely born!

I had lived a wild-flower life, I was planted now in a tomb;
The daisy will shut to the shadow, I closed my heart to the gloom;
I threw myself all abroad—I would play my part with the young
By the low foot-lights of the world—and I caught the wreath that was flung.

III.

Mother, I have not—however their tongues may have babbled of me—
Sinn'd thro' an animal vileness, for all but a dwarf was he,
And all but a hunchback too; and I look'd at him, first, askance
With pity—not he the knight for an amorous girl's romance!
Tho' wealthy enough to have bask'd in the light of a dowerless smile,
Having lands at home and abroad in a rich West-Indian isle;
But I came on him once at a ball, the heart of a listening crowd—
Why, what a brow was there! he was seated—speaking aloud

To women, the flower of the time, and men at the helm of state—
Flowing with easy greatness and touching on all things great,
Science, philosophy, song—till I felt myself ready to weep
For I knew not what, when I heard that voice,—as mellow and deep
As a psalm by a mighty master and peal'd from an organ,—roll
Rising and falling—for, Mother, the voice was the voice of the soul;
And the sun of the soul made day in the dark of his wonderful eyes.
Here was the hand that would help me, would heal me—the heart that was wise!
And he, poor man, when he learnt that I hated the ring I wore,
He helpt me with death, and he heal'd me with sorrow for evermore.

IV.

For I broke the bond. That day my nurse had brought me the child.
The small sweet face was flush'd, but it coo'd to the Mother and smiled.

'Anything ailing,' I ask'd her, 'with baby?' She shook her head,
And the Motherless Mother kiss'd it, and turn'd in her haste and fled.

v.

Low warm winds had gently breathed us away from the land—
Ten long sweet summer days upon deck, sitting hand in hand—
When he clothed a naked mind with the wisdom and wealth of his own,
And I bow'd myself down as a slave to his intellectual throne,
When he coin'd into English gold some treasure of classical song,
When he flouted a statesman's error, or flamed at a public wrong,
When he rose as it were on the wings of an eagle beyond me, and past
Over the range and the change of the world from the first to the last,
When he spoke of his tropical home in the canes by the purple tide,
And the high star-crowns of his palms on the deep-wooded mountain-side,

And cliffs all robed in lianas that dropt to the brink
of his bay,
And trees like the towers of a minster, the sons of a
winterless day.
'Paradise there!' so he said, but I seem'd in Para-
dise then
With the first great love I had felt for the first and
greatest of men;
Ten long days of summer and sin—if it must be so—
But days of a larger light than I ever again shall
know—
Days that will glimmer, I fear, thro' life to my latest
breath;
'No frost there,' so he said, 'as in truest Love no
Death.'

VI.

Mother, one morning a bird with a warble plaintively
sweet
Perch'd on the shrouds, and then fell fluttering down
at my feet;
I took it, he made it a cage, we fondled it, Stephen
and I,
But it died, and I thought of the child for a moment,
I scarce know why.

VII.

But if sin be sin, not inherited fate, as many will say,
My sin to my desolate little one found me at sea on a day,
When her orphan wail came borne in the shriek of a growing wind,
And a voice rang out in the thunders of Ocean and Heaven 'Thou hast sinn'd.'
And down in the cabin were we, for the towering crest of the tides
Plunged on the vessel and swept in a cataract off from her sides,
And ever the great storm grew with a howl and a hoot of the blast
In the rigging, voices of hell—then came the crash of the mast.
'The wages of sin is death,' and there I began to weep,
'I am the Jonah, the crew should cast me into the deep,
For ah God, what a heart was mine to forsake her even for you.'
'Never the heart among women,' he said, 'more tender and true.'
'The heart! not a mother's heart, when I left my darling alone.'

'Comfort yourself, for the heart of the father will
care for his own.'
'The heart of the father will spurn her,' I cried, 'for
the sin of the wife,
The cloud of the mother's shame will enfold her and
darken her life.'
Then his pale face twitch'd; 'O Stephen, I love you,
I love you, and yet'—
As I lean'd away from his arms—'would God, we had
never met!'
And he spoke not—only the storm; till after a little,
I yearn'd
For his voice again, and he call'd to me 'Kiss me!'
and there—as I turn'd—
'The heart, the heart!' I kiss'd him, I clung to the
sinking form,
And the storm went roaring above us, and he—was
out of the storm.

VIII.

And then, then, Mother, the ship stagger'd under a
thunderous shock,
That shook us asunder, as if she had struck and crash'd
on a rock;
For a huge sea smote every soul from the decks of
The Falcon but one;

All of them, all but the man that was lash'd to the helm had gone;
And I fell—and the storm and the days went by, but I knew no more—
Lost myself—lay like the dead by the dead on the cabin floor,
Dead to the death beside me, and lost to the loss that was mine,
With a dim dream, now and then, of a hand giving bread and wine,
Till I woke from the trance, and the ship stood still, and the skies were blue,
But the face I had known, O Mother, was not the face that I knew.

IX.

The strange misfeaturing mask that I saw so amazed me, that I
Stumbled on deck, half mad. I would fling myself over and die!
But one—he was waving a flag—the one man left on the wreck—
'Woman'—he graspt at my arm—'stay there'—I crouch'd upon deck—
'We are sinking, and yet there's hope: look yonder,' he cried, 'a sail'

In a tone so rough that I broke into passionate tears, and the wail
Of a beaten babe, till I saw that a boat was nearing us—then
All on a sudden I thought, I shall look on the child again.

X.

They lower'd me down the side, and there in the boat I lay
With sad eyes fixt on the lost sea-home, as we glided away,
And I sigh'd, as the low dark hull dipt under the smiling main,
'Had I stay'd with *him*, I had now—with *him*—been out of my pain.'

XI.

They took us aboard: the crew were gentle, the captain kind;
But *I* was the lonely slave of an often-wandering mind;
For whenever a rougher gust might tumble a stormier wave,
'O Stephen,' I moan'd, 'I am coming to thee in thine Ocean-grave.'

And again, when a balmier breeze curl'd over a peace-
fuller sea,
I found myself moaning again 'O child, I am coming
to thee.'

XII.

The broad white brow of the Isle—that bay with the
colour'd sand—
Rich was the rose of sunset there, as we drew to the
land;
All so quiet the ripple would hardly blanch into
spray
At the feet of the cliff; and I pray'd—'my child'—
for I still could pray—
'May her life be as blissfully calm, be never gloom'd
by the curse
Of a sin, not hers!'
Was it well with the child?
I wrote to the nurse
Who had borne my flower on her hireling heart; and
an answer came
Not from the nurse—nor yet to the wife—to her
maiden name!
I shook as I open'd the letter—I knew that hand too
well—

And from it a scrap, clipt out of the 'deaths' in a paper, fell.

'Ten long sweet summer days' of fever, and want of care!

And gone—that day of the storm—O Mother, she came to me there.

DESPAIR.

A man and his wife having lost faith in a God, and hope of a life to come, and being utterly miserable in this, resolve to end themselves by drowning. The woman is drowned, but the man rescued by a minister of the sect he had abandoned.

I.

Is it you, that preach'd in the chapel there looking over the sand?
Follow'd us too that night, and dogg'd us, and drew me to land?

II.

What did I feel that night? You are curious. How should I tell?
Does it matter so much what I felt? You rescued me —yet—was it well
That you came unwish'd for, uncall'd, between me and the deep and my doom,
Three days since, three more dark days of the Godless gloom

Of a life without sun, without health, without hope, without any delight
In anything here upon earth? but ah God, that night, that night
When the rolling eyes of the lighthouse there on the fatal neck
Of land running out into rock—they had saved many hundreds from wreck—
Glared on our way toward death, I remember I thought, as we past,
Does it matter how many they saved? we are all of us wreck'd at last—
'Do you fear?' and there came thro' the roar of the breaker a whisper, a breath,
'Fear? am I not with you? I am frighted at life not death.'

III.

And the suns of the limitless Universe sparkled and shone in the sky,
Flashing with fires as of God, but we knew that their light was a lie—
Bright as with deathless hope—but, however they sparkled and shone,
The dark little worlds running round them were worlds of woe like our own—

No soul in the heaven above, no soul on the earth
below,
A fiery scroll written over with lamentation and woe.

IV.

See, we were nursed in the drear nightfold of your
fatalist creed,
And we turn'd to the growing dawn, we had hoped for
a dawn indeed,
When the light of a Sun that was coming would scat-
ter the ghosts of the Past,
And the cramping creeds that had madden'd the peo-
ples would vanish at last,
And we broke away from the Christ, our human
brother and friend,
For He spoke, or it seem'd that He spoke, of a Hell
without help, without end.

V.

Hoped for a dawn and it came, but the promise had
faded away;
We had past from a cheerless night to the glare of a
drearier day;
He is only a cloud and a smoke who was once a pillar
of fire,

The guess of a worm in the dust and the shadow of its desire—
Of a worm as it writhes in a world of the weak trodden down by the strong,
Of a dying worm in a world, all massacre, murder, and wrong.

VI.

O we poor orphans of nothing—alone on that lonely shore—
Born of the brainless Nature who knew not that which she bore!
Trusting no longer that earthly flower would be heavenly fruit—
Come from the brute, poor souls—no souls—and to die with the brute——

VII.

Nay, but I am not claiming your pity: I know you of old—
Small pity for those that have ranged from the narrow warmth of your fold,
Where you bawl'd the dark side of your faith and a God of eternal rage,
Till you flung us back on ourselves, and the human heart, and the Age.

VIII.

But pity—the Pagan held it a vice—was in her and in me,
Helpless, taking the place of the pitying God that should be!
Pity for all that aches in the grasp of an idiot power,
And pity for our own selves on an earth that bore not a flower;
Pity for all that suffers on land or in air or the deep,
And pity for our own selves till we long'd for eternal sleep.

IX.

'Lightly step over the sands! the waters—you hear them call!
Life with its anguish, and horrors, and errors—away with it all!'
And she laid her hand in my own—she was always loyal and sweet—
Till the points of the foam in the dusk came playing about our feet.
There was a strong sea-current would sweep us out to the main.
'Ah God' tho' I felt as I spoke I was taking the name in vain—

'Ah God' and we turn'd to each other, we kiss'd, we embraced, she and I,
Knowing the Love we were used to believe everlasting would die:
We had read their know-nothing books and we lean'd to the darker side—
Ah God, should we find Him, perhaps, perhaps, if we died, if we died;
We never had found Him on earth, this earth is a fatherless Hell—
'Dear Love, for ever and ever, for ever and ever farewell,'
Never a cry so desolate, not since the world began,
Never a kiss so sad, no, not since the coming of man!

X.

But the blind wave cast me ashore, and you saved me, a valueless life.
Not a grain of gratitude mine! You have parted the man from the wife.
I am left alone on the land, she is all alone in the sea;
If a curse meant ought, I would curse you for not having let me be.

XI.

Visions of youth—for my brain was drunk with the water, it seems;
I had past into perfect quiet at length out of pleasant dreams,
And the transient trouble of drowning—what was it when match'd with the pains
Of the hellish heat of a wretched life rushing back thro' the veins?

XII.

Why should I live? one son had forged on his father and fled,
And if I believed in a God, I would thank him, the other is dead,
And there was a baby-girl, that had never look'd on the light:
Happiest she of us all, for she past from the night to the night.

XIII.

But the crime, if a crime, of her eldest-born, her glory, her boast,

Struck hard at the tender heart of the mother, and broke it almost;
Tho', glory and shame dying out for ever in endless time,
Does it matter so much whether crown'd for a virtue, or hang'd for a crime?

XIV.

And ruin'd by *him*, by *him*, I stood there, naked, amazed
In a world of arrogant opulence, fear'd myself turning crazed,
And I would not be mock'd in a madhouse! and she, the delicate wife,
With a grief that could only be cured, if cured, by the surgeon's knife,—

XV.

Why should we bear with an hour of torture, a moment of pain,
If every man die for ever, if all his griefs are in vain,
And the homeless planet at length will be wheel'd thro' the silence of space,
Motherless evermore of an ever-vanishing race,

When the worm shall have writhed its last, and its last brother-worm will have fled
From the dead fossil skull that is left in the rocks of an earth that is dead?

XVI.

Have I crazed myself over their horrible infidel writings? O yes,
For these are the new dark ages, you see, of the popular press,
When the bat comes out of his cave, and the owls are whooping at noon,
And Doubt is the lord of this dunghill and crows to the sun and the moon,
Till the Sun and the Moon of our science are both of them turn'd into blood,
And Hope will have broken her heart, running after a shadow of good;
For their knowing and know-nothing books are scatter'd from hand to hand—
We have knelt in your know-all chapel too looking over the sand.

XVII.

What! I should call on that Infinite Love that has served us so well?

Infinite cruelty rather that made everlasting Hell,
Made us, foreknew us, foredoom'd us, and does what
he will with his own;
Better our dead brute mother who never has heard us
groan!

XVIII.

Hell? if the souls of men were immortal, as men
have been told,
The lecher would cleave to his lusts, and the miser
would yearn for his gold,
And so there were Hell for ever! but were there a
God as you say,
His Love would have power over Hell till it utterly
vanish'd away.

XIX.

Ah yet—I have had some glimmer, at times, in my
gloomiest woe,
Of a God behind all—after all—the great God for
aught that I know;
But the God of Love and of Hell together—they can-
not be thought,
If there be such a God, may the Great God curse him
and bring him to nought!

XX.

Blasphemy! whose is the fault? is it mine? for why would you save
A madman to vex you with wretched words, who is best in his grave?
Blasphemy! ay, why not, being damn'd beyond hope of grace?
O would I were yonder with her, and away from your faith and your face!
Blasphemy! true! I have scared you pale with my scandalous talk,
But the blasphemy to *my* mind lies all in the way that you walk.

XXI.

Hence! she is gone! can I stay? can I breathe divorced from the Past?
You needs must have good lynx-eyes if I do not escape you at last.
Our orthodox coroner doubtless will find it a felo-de-se,
And the stake and the cross-road, fool, if you will, does it matter to me?

THE ANCIENT SAGE.

A THOUSAND summers ere the time of Christ
From out his ancient city came a Seer
Whom one that loved, and honour'd him, and yet
Was no disciple, richly garb'd, but worn
From wasteful living, follow'd—in his hand
A scroll of verse—till that old man before
A cavern whence an affluent fountain pour'd
From darkness into daylight, turn'd and spoke.

This wealth of waters might but seem to draw
From yon dark cave, but, son, the source is higher,
Yon summit half-a-league in air—and higher,
The cloud that hides it—higher still, the heavens
Whereby the cloud was moulded, and whereout
The cloud descended. Force is from the heights.
I am wearied of our city, son, and go
To spend my one last year among the hills.
What hast thou there? Some deathsong for the Ghouls
To make their banquet relish? let me read.

"How far thro' all the bloom and brake
That nightingale is heard!
What power but the bird's could make
This music in the bird?
How summer-bright are yonder skies,
And earth as fair in hue!
And yet what sign of aught that lies
Behind the green and blue?
But man to-day is fancy's fool
As man hath ever been.
The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule
Were never heard or seen."

If thou would'st hear the Nameless, and wilt dive
Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
There, brooding by the central altar, thou
May'st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,
By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not know;
For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there
But never yet hath dipt into the abysm,
The Abysm of all Abysms, beneath, within
The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth,
And in the million-millionth of a grain
Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
And ever vanishing, never vanishes,

To me, my son, more mystic than myself,
Or even than the Nameless is to me.
And when thou sendest thy free soul thro' heaven,
Nor understandest bound nor boundlessness,
Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred names.
And if the Nameless should withdraw from all
Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

"And since—from when this earth began—
The Nameless never came
Among us, never spake with man,
And never named the Name"—

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one:
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no
Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay my son,
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!

She reels not in the storm of warring words,
She brightens at the clash of 'Yes' and 'No,'
She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the Worst,
She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,
She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,
She hears the lark within the songless egg,
She finds the fountain where they wail'd 'Mirage'!

"What Power? aught akin to Mind,
The mind in me and you?
Or power as of the Gods gone blind
Who see not what they do?"

But some in yonder city hold, my son,
That none but Gods could build this house of ours,
So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond
All work of man, yet, like all work of man,
A beauty with defect——till That which knows,
And is not known, but felt thro' what we feel
Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
On this half-deed, and shape it at the last
According to the Highest in the Highest.

"What Power but the Years that make
And break the vase of clay,
And stir the sleeping earth, and wake

The bloom that fades away?
What rulers but the Days and Hours
That cancel weal with woe,
And wind the front of youth with flowers,
And cap our age with snow?"

The days and hours are ever glancing by,
And seem to flicker past thro' sun and shade,
Or short, or long, as Pleasure leads, or Pain;
But with the Nameless is nor Day nor Hour;
Tho' we, thin minds, who creep from thought to thought,
Break into 'Thens' and 'Whens' the Eternal Now:
This double seeming of the single world!—
My words are like the babblings in a dream
Of nightmare, when the babblings break the dream.
But thou be wise in this dream-world of ours,
Nor take thy dial for thy deity,
But make the passing shadow serve thy will.

"The years that made the stripling wise
Undo their work again,
And leave him, blind of heart and eyes,
The last and least of men;
Who clings to earth, and once would dare
Hell-heat or Arctic cold,
And now one breath of cooler air

Would loose him from his hold;
His winter chills him to the root,
He withers marrow and mind;
The kernel of the shrivell'd fruit
Is jutting thro' the rind;
The tiger spasms tear his chest,
The palsy wags his head;
The wife, the sons, who love him best
Would fain that he were dead;
The griefs by which he once was wrung
Were never worth the while"—

Who knows? or whether this earth-narrow life
Be yet but yolk, and forming in the shell?

"The shaft of scorn that once had stung
But wakes a dotard smile."

The placid gleam of sunset after storm!

"The statesman's brain that sway'd the past
Is feebler than his knees;
The passive sailor wrecks at last
In ever-silent seas;
The warrior hath forgot his arms,
The Learned all his lore;
The changing market frets or charms

The merchant's hope no more;
The prophet's beacon burn'd in vain,
And now is lost in cloud;
The plowman passes, bent with pain,
To mix with what he plow'd;
The poet whom his Age would quote
As heir of endless fame—
He knows not ev'n the book he wrote,
Not even his own name.
For man has overlived his day,
And, darkening in the light,
Scarce feels the senses break away
To mix with ancient Night."

The shell must break before the bird can fly.

"The years that when my Youth began
Had set the lily and rose
By all my ways where'er they ran,
Have ended mortal foes;
My rose of love for ever gone,
My lily of truth and trust—
They made her lily and rose in one,
And changed her into dust.
O rosetree planted in my grief,
And growing, on her tomb,
Her dust is greening in your leaf,

Her blood is in your bloom.
O slender lily waving there,
And laughing back the light,
In vain you tell me 'Earth is fair'
When all is dark as night."

My son, the world is dark with griefs and graves,
So dark that men cry out against the Heavens.
Who knows but that the darkness is in man?
The doors of Night may be the gates of Light;
For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and then
Suddenly heal'd, how would'st thou glory in all
The splendours and the voices of the world!
And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore
Await the last and largest sense to make
The phantom walls of this illusion fade,
And show us that the world is wholly fair.

"But vain the tears for darken'd years
As laughter over wine,
And vain the laughter as the tears,
O brother, mine or thine,
For all that laugh, and all that weep
And all that breathe are one
Slight ripple on the boundless deep
That moves, and all is gone."

But that one ripple on the boundless deep
Feels that the deep is boundless, and itself
For ever changing form, but evermore
One with the boundless motion of the deep.

"Yet wine and laughter friends! and set
The lamps alight, and call
For golden music, and forget
The darkness of the pall."

If utter darkness closed the day, my son——
But earth's dark forehead flings athwart the heavens
Her shadow crown'd with stars—and yonder—out
To northward—some that never set, but pass
From sight and night to lose themselves in day.
I hate the black negation of the bier,
And wish the dead, as happier than ourselves
And higher, having climb'd one step beyond
Our village miseries, might be borne in white
To burial or to burning, hymn'd from hence
With songs in praise of death, and crown'd with flowers!

"O worms and maggots of to-day
Without their hope of wings!"

But louder than thy rhyme the silent Word
Of that world-prophet in the heart of man.

"Tho' some have gleams or so they say
Of more than mortal things."

To-day? but what of yesterday? for oft
On me, when boy, there came what then I call'd,
Who knew no books and no philosophies,
In my boy-phrase 'The Passion of the Past.'
The first gray streak of earliest summer-dawn,
The last long stripe of waning crimson gloom,
As if the late and early were but one—
A height, a broken grange, a grove, a flower
Had murmurs 'Lost and gone and lost and gone!'
A breath, a whisper—some divine farewell—
Desolate sweetness—far and far away—
What had he loved, what had he lost, the boy?
I know not and I speak of what has been.
And more, my son! for more than once when I
Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs, the limbs
Were strange not mine—and yet no shade of doubt,
But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self
The gain of such large life as match'd with ours
Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in words,
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-world.

"And idle gleams will come and go,
But still the clouds remain;"

The clouds themselves are children of the Sun.

"And Night and Shadow rule below
When only Day should reign."

And Day and Night are children of the Sun,
And idle gleams to thee are light to me.
Some say, the Light was father of the Night,
And some, the Night was father of the Light,
No night no day!—I touch thy world again—
No ill no good! such counter-terms, my son,
Are border-races, holding, each its own
By endless war: but night enough is there
In yon dark city: get thee back: and since
The key to that weird casket, which for thee
But holds a skull, is neither thine nor mine,
But in the hand of what is more than man,
Or in man's hand when man is more than man,
Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,
And make thy gold thy vassal not thy king,
And fling free alms into the beggar's bowl,
And send the day into the darken'd heart;
Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men,
A dying echo from a falling wall;

Nor care—for Hunger hath the Evil eye—
To vex the noon with fiery gems, or fold
Thy presence in the silk of sumptuous looms;
Nor roll thy viands on a luscious tongue,
Nor drown thyself with flies in honied wine;
Nor thou be rageful, like a handled bee,
And lose thy life by usage of thy sting;
Nor harm an adder thro' the lust for harm,
Nor make a snail's horn shrink for wantonness;
And more—think well! Do-well will follow thought,
And in the fatal sequence of this world
An evil thought may soil thy children's blood;
But curb the beast would cast thee in the mire,
And leave the hot swamp of voluptuousness
A cloud between the Nameless and thyself,
And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,
And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence, if thou
Look higher, then—perchance—thou mayest—beyond
A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow—see
The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision!

So, farewell.

THE FLIGHT.

I.

ARE you sleeping? have you forgotten? do not sleep,
my sister dear!
How *can* you sleep? the morning brings the day I
hate and fear;
The cock has crow'd already once, he crows before
his time;
Awake! the creeping glimmer steals, the hills are
white with rime.

II.

Ah, clasp me in your arms, sister, ah, fold me to your
breast!
Ah, let me weep my fill once more, and cry myself to
rest!
To rest? to rest and wake no more were better rest
for me,
Than to waken every morning to that face I loathe to
see:

III.

I envied your sweet slumber, all night so calm you lay,
The night was calm, the morn is calm, and like another day;
But I could wish yon moaning sea would rise and burst the shore,
And such a whirlwind blow these woods, as never blew before.

IV.

For, one by one, the stars went down across the gleaming pane,
And project after project rose, and all of them were vain;
The blackthorn-blossom fades and falls and leaves the bitter sloe,
The hope I catch at vanishes and youth is turn'd to woe.

V.

Come, speak a little comfort! all night I pray'd with tears,
And yet no comfort came to me, and now the morn appears,

When he will tear me from your side, who bought me
for his slave:
This father pays his debt with me, and weds me to
my grave.

VI.

What father, this or mine, was he, who, on that sum-
mer day
When I had fall'n from off the crag we clamber'd up
in play,
Found, fear'd me dead, and groan'd, and took and
kiss'd me, and again
He kiss'd me; and I loved him then; he *was* my
father then.

VII.

No father now, the tyrant vassal of a tyrant vice!
The Godless Jephtha vows his child . . . to one cast
of the dice.
These ancient woods, this Hall at last will go—per-
haps have gone,
Except his own meek daughter yield her life, heart,
soul to one—

VIII.

To one who knows I scorn him. O the formal mocking bow,
The cruel smile, the courtly phrase that masks his malice now—
But often in the sidelong eyes a gleam of all things ill—
It is not Love but Hate that weds a bride against her will;

IX.

Hate, that would pluck from this true breast the locket that I wear,
The precious crystal into which I braided Edwin's hair!
The love that keeps this heart alive beats on it night and day—
One golden curl, his golden gift, before he past away.

X.

He left us weeping in the woods; his boat was on the sand;
How slowly down the rocks he went, how loth to quit the land!

And all my life was darken'd, as I saw the white sail run,
And darken, up that lane of light into the setting sun.

XI.

How often have we watch'd the sun fade from us thro' the West,
And follow Edwin to those isles, those islands of the Blest!
Is *he* not there? would I were there, the friend, the bride, the wife,
With him, where summer never dies, with Love, the Sun of life!

XII.

O would I were in Edwin's arms—once more—to feel his breath
Upon my cheek—on Edwin's ship, with Edwin, ev'n in death,
Tho' all about the shuddering wreck the death-white sea should rave,
Or if lip were laid to lip on the pillows of the wave.

XIII.

Shall I take *him?* I kneel with *him?* I swear and swear forsworn

To love him most, whom most I loathe, to honour
whom I scorn?
The Fiend would yell, the grave would yawn, my
mother's ghost would rise—
To lie, to lie—in God's own house—the blackest of
all lies!

XIV.

Why—rather than that hand in mine, tho' every
pulse would freeze,
I'd sooner fold an icy corpse dead of some foul dis-
ease:
Wed him? I will not wed him, let them spurn me
from the doors,
And I will wander till I die about the barren moors.

XV.

The dear, mad bride who stabb'd her bridegroom on
her bridal night
If mad, then I am mad, but sane, if she were in the
right.
My father's madness makes me mad—but words are
only words!
I am not mad, not yet, not quite—There! listen how
the birds

XVI.

Begin to warble yonder in the budding orchard trees!
The lark has past from earth to Heaven upon the morning breeze!
How gladly, were I one of those, how early would I wake!
And yet the sorrow that I bear is sorrow for *his* sake.

XVII.

They love their mates, to whom they sing; or else their songs, that meet
The morning with such music, would never be so sweet!
And tho' these fathers will not hear, the blessed Heavens are just,
And Love is fire, and burns the feet would trample it to dust.

XVIII.

A door was open'd in the house—who? who? my father sleeps!
A stealthy foot upon the stair! he—some one—this way creeps!

If he? yes, he . . . lurks, listens, fears his victim may have fled—
He! where is some sharp-pointed thing? he comes, and finds me dead.

XIX.

Not he, not yet! and time to act—but how my temples burn!
And idle fancies flutter me, I know not where to turn;
Speak to me, sister; counsel me; this marriage must not be.
You only know the love that makes the world a world to me!

XX.

Our gentle mother, had *she* lived—but we were left alone:
That other left us to ourselves; he cared not for his own;
So all the summer long we roam'd in these wild woods of ours,
My Edwin loved to call us then 'His two wild woodland flowers.'

XXI.

Wild flowers blowing side by side in God's free light and air,
Wild flowers of the secret woods, when Edwin found us there,
Wild woods in which we roved with him, and heard his passionate vow,
Wild woods in which we rove no more, if we be parted now!

XXII.

You will not leave me thus in grief to wander forth forlorn;
We never changed a bitter word, not once since we were born;
Our dying mother join'd our hands; she knew this father well;
She bad us love, like souls in Heaven, and now I fly from Hell,

XXIII.

And you with me; and we shall light upon some lonely shore,
Some lodge within the waste sea-dunes, and hear the waters roar,

And see the ships from out the West go dipping thro' the foam,
And sunshine on that sail at last which brings our Edwin home.

XXIV.

But look, the morning grows apace, and lights the old church-tower,
And lights the clock! the hand points five—O me—it strikes the hour—
I bide no more, I meet my fate, whatever ills betide!
Arise, my own true sister, come forth! the world is wide.

XXV.

And yet my heart is ill at ease, my eyes are dim with dew,
I seem to see a new-dug grave up yonder by the yew!
If we should never more return, but wander hand in hand
With breaking hearts, without a friend, and in a distant land.

XXVI.

O sweet, they tell me that the world is hard, and harsh of mind,

But can it be so hard, so harsh, as those that should be kind?
That matters not: let come what will; at last the end is sure,
And every heart that loves with truth is equal to endure.

TOMORROW.

I.

HER, that yer Honour was spakin' to? Whin, yer Honour? last year—
Standin' here be the bridge, when last yer Honour was here?
An' yer Honour ye gev her the top of the mornin', 'Tomorra' says she.
What did they call her, yer Honour? They call'd her Molly Magee.
An' yer Honour's the thrue ould blood that always manes to be kind,
But there's rason in all things, yer Honour, for Molly was out of her mind.

II.

Shure, an' meself remimbers wan night comin' down be the sthrame,
An' it seems to me now like a bit of yisther-day in a dhrame—

Here where yer Honour seen her—there was but a slip of a moon,
But I hard thim—Molly Magee wid her batchelor, Danny O'Roon—
'You've been takin' a dhrop o' the crathur' an' Danny says 'Troth, an' I been
Dhrinkin' yer health wid Shamus O'Shea at Katty's shebeen;[1]
But I must be lavin' ye soon.' 'Ochone are ye goin' away?'
'Goin' to cut the Sassenach whate' he says 'over the say'—
'An' whin will ye meet me agin?' an' I hard him 'Molly asthore,
I'll meet you agin tomorra,' says he, 'be the chapel-door.'
'An' whin are ye goin' to lave me?' 'O' Monday mornin'' says he;
'An' shure thin ye'll meet me tomorra?' 'Tomorra, tomorra, Machree!'
Thin Molly's ould mother, yer Honour, that had no likin' for Dan,
Call'd from her cabin an' tould her to come away from the man,
An' Molly Magee kem flyin' acrass me, as light as a lark,

[1] Grog-shop.

An' Dan stood there for a minute, an' thin wint into the dark.
But wirrah! the storm that night—the tundher, an' rain that fell,
An' the sthrames runnin' down at the back o' the glin 'ud 'a dhrownded Hell.

III.

But airth was at pace nixt mornin', an' Hiven in its glory smiled,
As the Holy Mother o' Glory that smiles at her sleepin' child—
Ethen—she stept an the chapel-green, an' she turn'd herself roun'
Wid a diamond dhrop in her eye, for Danny was not to be foun',
An' many's the time that I watch'd her at mass lettin' down the tear,
For the Divil a Danny was there, yer Honour, for forty year.

IV.

Och, Molly Magee, wid the red o' the rose an' the white o' the May,
An' yer hair as black as the night, an' yer eyes as bright as the day!

Achora, yer laste little whishper was sweet as the lilt of a bird!

Acushla, ye set me heart batin' to music wid ivery word!

An' sorra the Queen wid her sceptre in sich an illigant han',

An' the fall of yer foot in the dance was as light as snow an the lan',

An' the sun kem out of a cloud whiniver ye walkt in the shtreet,

An' Shamus O'Shea was yer shadda, an' laid himself undher yer feet,

An' I loved ye meself wid a heart and a half, me darlin', and he

'Ud 'a shot his own sowl dead for a kiss of ye, Molly Magee.

v.

But shure we wor betther frinds whin I crack'd his skull for her sake,

An' he ped me back wid the best he could give at ould Donovan's wake—

For the boys wor about her agin whin Dan didn't come to the fore,

An' Shamus along wid the rest, but she put thim all to the door.

An', afther, I thried her meself av the bird 'ud come to me call,
But Molly, begorrah, 'ud listhen to naither at all, at all.

VI.

An' her nabours an' frinds 'ud consowl an' condowl wid her, airly and late,
'Your Danny,' they says, 'niver crasst over say to the Sassenach whate;
He's gone to the States, aroon, an' he's married another wife,
An' ye'll niver set eyes an the face of the thraithur agin in life!
An' to dhrame of a married man, death alive, is a mortial sin.'
But Molly says 'I'd his hand-promise, an' shure he'll meet me agin.'

VII.

An' afther her paärints had inter'd glory, an' both in wan day,
She began to spake to herself, the crathur, and whishper, an' say
'Tomorra, Tomorra!' an' Father Molowny he tuk her in han',

'Molly, you're manin',' he says, 'me dear, av I undherstan',
That ye'll meet your paärints agin an' yer Danny O'Roon afore God
Wid his blessed Marthyrs an' Saints;' an' she gev him a frindly nod,
'Tomorra, Tomorra,' she says, an' she didn't intind to desave,
But her wits wor dead, an' her hair was as white as the snow an a grave.

VIII.

Arrah now, here last month they wor diggin' the bog, an' they foun'
Dhrownded in black bog-wather a corp lyin' undher groun'.

IX.

Yer Honour's own agint, he says to me wanst, at Katty's shebeen,
'The Divil take all the black lan', for a blessin' 'ud come wid the green!'
An' where 'ud the poor man, thin, cut his bit o' turf for the fire?
But och! bad scran to the bogs whin they swallies the man intire!

An' sorra the bog that's in Hiven wid all the light an' the glow,
An' there's hate enough, shure, widout *thim* in the Divil's kitchen below.

X.

Thim ould blind nagers in Agypt, I hard his Riverence say,
Could keep their haithen kings in the flesh for the Jidgemint day,
An', faix, be the piper o' Moses, they kep the cat an' the dog,
But it 'ud 'a been aisier work av they lived be an Irish bog.

XI.

How-an-iver they laid this body they foun' an the grass
Be the chapel-door, an' the people 'ud see it that wint into mass—
But a frish gineration had riz, an' most of the ould was few,
An' I didn't know him meself, an' nōne of the parish knew.

XII.

But Molly kem limpin' up wid her stick, she was lamed iv a knee,
Thin a slip of a gossoon call'd, 'Div ye know him, Molly Magee?'
An' she stood up strait as the Queen of the world—she lifted her head—
'He said he would meet me tomorra!' an' dhropt down dead an the dead.

XIII.

Och, Molly, we thought, machree, ye would start back ágin into life,
Whin we laid yez, aich be aich, at yer wake like husban' an' wife.
Sorra the dhry eye thin but was wet for the frinds that was gone!
Sorra the silent throat but we hard it cryin' 'Ochone!'
An' Shamus O'Shea that has now ten childer, hansome an' tall,
Him an' his childer wor keenin' as if he had lost thim all.

XIV.

Thin his Riverence buried thim both in wan grave be the dead boor-tree,[1]
The young man Danny O'Roon wid his ould woman, Molly Magee.

XV.

May all the flowers o' Jeroosilim blossom an' spring from the grass,
Imbrashin' an' kissin' aich other—as ye did—over yer Crass!
An' the lark fly out o' the flowers wid his song to the Sun an' the Moon,
An' tell thim in Hiven about Molly Magee an' her Danny O'Roon,
Till Holy St. Pether gets up wid his kays an' opens the gate!
An' shure, be the Crass, that's betther nor cuttin' the Sassenach whate
To be there wid the Blessed Mother, an' Saints an' Marthyrs galore,
An' singin' yer 'Aves' an' 'Pathers' for iver an' ivermore.

[1] Elder-tree.

XVI.

An' now that I tould yer Honour whativer I hard an' seen,
Yer Honour 'll give me a thrifle to dhrink yer health in potheen.

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS.

I.

MILK for my sweet-arts, Bess! fur it mun be the time about now
When Molly cooms in fro' the far-end close wi' her paäils fro' the cow.
Eh! tha be new to the plaäce—thou'rt gaäpin'—doesn't tha see
I calls 'em arter the fellers es once was sweet upo' me?

II.

Naäy to be sewer it be past 'er time. What maäkes 'er sa laäte?
Goä to the laäne at the back, an' looök thruf Maddison's gaäte!

III.

Sweet-arts! Molly belike may 'a lighted to-night upo' one.

Sweet-arts! thanks to the Lord that I niver not listen'd to noän!
So I sits i' my oän armchair wi' my oän kettle theere o' the hob,
An' Tommy the fust, an' Tommy the second, an' Steevie an' Rob.

IV.

Rob, coom oop 'ere o' my knee. Thou sees that i' spite o' the men
I 'a kep' thruf thick an' thin my two 'oonderd a-year to mysen;
Yis! thaw tha call'd me es pretty es ony lass i' the Shere,
An' thou be es pretty a Tabby, but Robby I seed thruf ya theere.

V.

Feyther 'ud saäy I wur ugly es sin, an' I beänt not vaäin,
But I niver wur downright hugly, thaw soom 'ud 'a thowt ma plaäin,
An' I wasn't sa plaäin i' pink ribbons, ye said I wur pretty i' pinks,
An' I liked to 'ear it I did, but I beänt sich a fool as ye thinks;

Ye was stroäkin ma down wi' the 'air, as I be a-stroäkin o' you,
But whiniver I looök'd i' the glass I wur sewer that it couldn't be true;
Niver wur pretty, not I, but ye knaw'd it wur pleasant to 'ear,
Thaw it warn't not me es wur pretty, but my two 'oonderd a-year.

VI.

D'ya mind the murnin' when we was a-walkin' togither, an' stood
By the claäy'd-oop pond, that the foälk be sa scared at, i' Gigglesby wood,
Wheer the poor wench drowndid hersen, black Sal, es 'ed been disgraäced?
An' I feel'd thy arm es I stood wur a-creeäpin about my waäist;
An' me es wur allus afear'd of a man's gittin' ower fond,
I sidled awaäy an' awaäy till I plumpt foot fust i' the pond;
And, Robby, I niver 'a liked tha sa well, as I did that daäy,
Fur tha joompt in thysen, an' tha hoickt my feet wi' a flop fro' the claäy.

Ay, stick oop thy back, an' set oop thy taäil, tha may
gie ma a kiss,
Fur I walk'd wi' tha all the way hoam an' wur niver
sa nigh saäyin' Yis.
But wa boäth was i' sich a clat we was shaämed to
cross Gigglesby Greeän,
Fur a cat may looök at a king thou knaws but the cat
mun be cleän.
Sa we boäth on us kep out o' sight o' the winders o'
Gigglesby Hinn—
Naäy, but the claws o' tha! quiet! they pricks cleän
thruf to the skin—
An' wa boäth slinkt 'oäm by the brokken shed i' the
laäne at the back,
Wheer the poodle runn'd at tha once, an' thou runn'd
oop o' the thack;
An' tha squeedg'd my 'and i' the shed, fur theere we
was forced to 'ide,
Fur I seed that Steevie wur coomin', and one o' the
Tommies beside.

VII.

Theere now, what art'a mewin at, Steevie? for owt I
can tell—
Robby wur fust to be sewer, or I mowt 'a liked tha
as well.

VIII.

But, Robby, I thowt o' tha all the while I wur chaäng-
in' my gown,
An' I thowt shall I chaänge my staäte? but, O Lord,
upo' coomin' down—
My bran-new carpet es fresh es a midder o' flowers i'
Maäy—
Why 'edn't tha wiped thy shoes? it wur clatted all
ower wi' claäy.
An' I could 'a cried ammost, fur I seed that it
couldn't be,
An' Robby I gied tha a raätin that sattled thy coortin
o' me.
An' Molly an' me was agreed, as we was a-cleänin'
the floor,
That a man be a durty thing an' a trouble an' plague
wi' indoor.
But I rued it arter a bit, fur I stuck to tha more na
the rest,
But I couldn't 'a lived wi' a man an' I knaws it be
all fur the best.

IX.

Naäy—let ma stroäk tha down till I maäkes tha es
smooth es silk,

But if I 'ed married tha, Robby, thou'd not 'a been worth thy milk,
Thou'd niver 'a cotch'd ony mice but 'a left me the work to do,
And 'a taäen to the bottle beside, so es all that I 'ears be true;
But I loovs tha to maäke thysen 'appy, an' soa purr awaäy, my dear,
Thou 'ed wellnigh purr'd ma awaäy fro' my oän two 'oonderd a-year.

x.

Sweärin agean, you Toms, as ye used to do twelve years sin'!
Ye niver 'eärd Steevie sweär 'cep' it wur at a dog coomin' in.
An' boath o' ye mun be fools to be hallus a-shawin' your claws,
Fur I niver cared nothink for neither—an' one o' ye deäd ye knaws!
Coom giv hoäver then, weant ye? I warrant ye soom fine daäy—
Theere, lig down—I shall hev to gie one or tother awaäy.
Can't ye taäke pattern by Steevie? ye shant hev a drop fro' the paäil.

Steevie be right good manners bang thruf to the tip o' the taäil.

XI.

Robby, git down wi'tha, wilt tha? let Steevie coom oop o' my knee.
Steevie, my lad, thou 'ed very nigh been the Steevie fur me!
Robby wur fust to be sewer, 'e wur burn an' bred i' the 'ouse,
But thou be es 'ansom a tabby es iver patted a mouse.

XII.

An' I beänt not vaäin, but I knaws I 'ed led tha a quieter life
Nor her wi' the hepitaph yonder! "A faäithful an' loovin' wife!"
An' 'cos o' thy farm by the beck, an' thy windmill oop o' the croft,
Tha thowt tha would marry ma, did tha? but that wur a bit ower soft,
Thaw thou was es soäber es daäy, wi' a niced red faäce, an' es cleän
Es a shillin' fresh fro' the mint wi' a bran-new 'eäd o' the Queeän,

An' thy farmin' es cleän es thysen', fur, Steevie, tha kep' it sa neät
That I niver not spied sa much es a poppy along wi' the wheät,
An' the wool of a thistle a-flyin' an' seeädin' tha haäted to see;
'Twur es bad es a battle-twig[1] 'ere i' my oän blue chaumber to me.
Ay, roob thy whiskers ageän ma, fur I could 'a taäen to tha well,
But fur thy bairns, poor Steevie, a bouncin' boy an' a gell.

XIII.

An' thou was es fond o' thy bairns es I be mysen o' my cats,
But I niver not wish'd fur childer, I hevn't naw likin' fur brats;
Pretty anew when ya dresses 'em oop, an' they goäs fur a walk,
Or sits wi' their 'ands afoor 'em, an' doesn't not 'inder the talk!
But their bottles o' pap, an' their mucky bibs, an' the clats an' the clouts,
An' their mashin' their toys to pieäces an' maäkin' ma deäf wi' their shouts,

[1] Earwig.

An' hallus a-joompin' about ma as if they was set upo' springs,
An' a haxin' ma hawkard questions, an' saäyin' on-decent things,
An' a-callin' ma 'hugly' mayhap to my faäce, or a teärin' my gown—
Dear! dear! dear! I mun part them Tommies—Steevie git down.

XIV.

Ye be wuss nor the men-tommies, you. I tell'd ya, na moor o' that!
Tom, lig theere o' the cushion, an' tother Tom 'ere o' the mat.

XV.

Theere! I ha' master'd *them!* Hed I married the Tommies—O Lord,
To loove an' obaäy the Tommies! I couldn't 'a stuck by my word.
To be horder'd about, an' waäked, when Molly 'd put out the light,
By a man coomin' in wi' a hiccup at ony hour o' the night!
An' the taäble staäin'd wi' 'is aäle, an' the mud o' 'is boots o' the stairs,

An' the stink o' 'is pipe i' the 'ouse, an' the mark o' 'is 'eäd o' the chairs!
An' noän o' my four sweet-arts 'ud 'a let me 'a hed my oän waäy,
Sa I likes 'em best wi' taäils when they 'evn't a word to saäy.

XVI.

An' I sits i' my oän little parlour, an' sarved by my oän little lass,
Wi' my oän little garden outside, an' my oän bed o' sparrow-grass,
An' my oän door-poorch wi' the woodbine an' jessmine a-dressin' it greeän,
An' my oän fine Jackman i' purple a roäbin' the 'ouse like a Queeän.

XVII.

An' the little gells bobs to ma hoffens es I be abroad i' the laänes,
When I goäs fur to coomfut the poor es be down wi' their haäches an' their paäins:
An' a haäf-pot o' jam, or a mossel o' meät when it beänt too dear,
They maäkes ma a graäter Laädy nor 'er i' the mansion theer,

Hes 'es hallus to hax of a man how much to spare or
to spend;
An' a spinster I be an' I will be, if soä pleäse God,
to the hend.

XVIII.

Mew! mew!—Bess wi' the milk! what ha maäde our
Molly sa laäte?
It should 'a been 'ere by seven, an' theere—it be
strikin' height—
'Cushie wur craäzed fur 'er cauf' well—I 'eärd 'er a
maäkin' 'er moän,
An' I thowt to mysen 'thank God that I hevn't naw
cauf o' my oän.'
Theere!
Set it down!
Now Robby!
You Tommies shall waäit to-night
Till Robby an' Steevie 'es 'ed their lap—an' it sarves
ye right.

LOCKSLEY HALL

SIXTY YEARS AFTER.

LATE, my grandson! half the morning have I paced these sandy tracts,
Watch'd again the hollow ridges roaring into cataracts,

Wander'd back to living boyhood while I heard the curlews call,
I myself so close on death, and death itself in Locksley Hall.

So—your happy suit was blasted—she the faultless, the divine;
And you liken—boyish babble—this boy-love of yours with mine.

I myself have often babbled doubtless of a foolish past;
Babble, babble; our old England may go down in babble at last.

'Curse him!' curse your fellow-victim? call him dotard in your rage?
Eyes that lured a doting boyhood well might fool a dotard's age.

Jilted for a wealthier! wealthier? yet perhaps she was not wise;
I remember how you kiss'd the miniature with those sweet eyes.

In the hall there hangs a painting—Amy's arms about my neck—
Happy children in a sunbeam sitting on the ribs of wreck.

In my life there was a picture, she that clasp'd my neck had flown;
I was left within the shadow sitting on the wreck alone.

Yours has been a slighter ailment, will you sicken for her sake?
You, not you! your modern amourist is of easier, earthlier make.

Amy loved me, Amy fail'd me, Amy was a timid child;

But your Judith—but your worldling—*she* had never driven me wild.

She that holds the diamond necklace dearer than the golden ring,
She that finds a winter sunset fairer than a morn of Spring.

She that in her heart is brooding on his briefer lease of life,
While she vows 'till death shall part us,' she the would-be-widow wife.

She the worldling born of worldlings—father, mother —be content,
Ev'n the homely farm can teach us there is something in descent.

Yonder in that chapel, slowly sinking now into the ground,
Lies the warrior, my forefather, with his feet upon the hound.

Cross'd! for once he sail'd the sea to crush the Moslem in his pride;
Dead the warrior, dead his glory, dead the cause in which he died.

Yet how often I and Amy in the mouldering aisle
have stood,
Gazing for one pensive moment on that founder of
our blood.

There again I stood to-day, and where of old we knelt
in prayer,
Close beneath the casement crimson with the shield
of Locksley—there,

All in white Italian marble, looking still as if she
smiled,
Lies my Amy dead in child-birth, dead the mother,
dead the child.

Dead—and sixty years ago, and dead her aged hus-
band now—
I this old white-headed dreamer stoopt and kiss'd her
marble brow.

Gone the fires of youth, the follies, furies, curses,
passionate tears,
Gone like fires and floods and earthquakes of the
planet's dawning years.

Fires that shook me once, but now to silent ashes
fall'n away.

Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of dying day.

Gone the tyrant of my youth, and mute below the chancel stones,
All his virtues—I forgive them—black in white above his bones.

Gone the comrades of my bivouac, some in fight against the foe,
Some thro' age and slow diseases, gone as all on earth will go.

Gone with whom for forty years my life in golden sequence ran,
She with all the charm of woman, she with all the breadth of man,

Strong in will and rich in wisdom, Edith, yet so lowly-sweet,
Woman to her inmost heart, and woman to her tender feet,

Very woman of very woman, nurse of ailing body and mind,
She that link'd again the broken chain that bound me to my kind.

Here to-day was Amy with me, while I wander'd down
the coast,
Near us Edith's holy shadow, smiling at the slighter
ghost.

Gone our sailor son thy father, Leonard early lost at
sea;
Thou alone, my boy, of Amy's kin and mine art left
to me.

Gone thy tender-natured mother, wearying to be left
alone,
Pining for the stronger heart that once had beat beside
her own.

Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worshipt, being true as
he was brave;
Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd, yet he look'd
beyond the grave,

Wiser there than you, that crowning barren Death as
lord of all,
Deem this over-tragic drama's closing curtain is the
pall!

Beautiful was death in him, who saw the death, but
kept the deck,

Saving women and their babes, and sinking with the
sinking wreck,

Gone for ever! Ever? no—for since our dying race
began,
Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of
man.

Those that in barbarian burials kill'd the slave, and
slew the wife,
Felt within themselves the sacred passion of the
second life.

Indian warriors dream of ampler hunting grounds be-
yond the night;
Ev'n the black Australian dying hopes he shall return,
a white.

Truth for truth, and good for good! The Good, the
True, the Pure, the Just—
Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they crum-
ble into dust.

Gone the cry of 'Forward, Forward,' lost within a
growing gloom;
Lost, or only heard in silence from the silence of a
tomb.

Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over time and space,
Staled by frequence, shrunk by usage into commonest commonplace!

'Forward' rang the voices then, and of the many mine was one.
Let us hush this cry of 'Forward' till ten thousand years have gone.

Far among the vanish'd races, old Assyrian kings would flay
Captives whom they caught in battle—iron-hearted victors they.

Ages after, while in Asia, he that led the wild Moguls,
Timur built his ghastly tower of eighty thousand human skulls,

Then, and here in Edward's time, an age of noblest English names,
Christian conquerors took and flung the conquer'd Christian into flames.

Love your enemy, bless your haters, said the Greatest of the great;

Christian love among the Churches look'd the twin
of heathen hate.

From the golden alms of Blessing man had coin'd
himself a curse:
Rome of Cæsar, Rome of Peter, which was crueller?
which was worse?

France had shown a light to all men, preach'd a
Gospel, all men's good;
Celtic Demos rose a Demon, shriek'd and slaked the
light with blood.

Hope was ever on her mountain, watching till the
day begun—
Crown'd with sunlight—over darkness—from the still
unrisen sun.

Have we grown at last beyond the passions of the
primal clan?
'Kill your enemy, for you hate him,' still, 'your
enemy' was a man.

Have we sunk below them? peasants maim the help-
less horse, and drive
Innocent cattle under thatch, and burn the kindlier
brutes alive.

Brutes, the brutes are not your wrongers—burnt at
midnight, found at morn,
Twisted hard in mortal agony with their offspring,
born-unborn,

Clinging to the silent mother! Are we devils? are
we men?
Sweet St. Francis of Assisi, would that he were here
again,

He that in his Catholic wholeness used to call the
very flowers
Sisters, brothers—and the beasts—whose pains are
hardly less than ours!

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! who can tell how
all will end?
Read the wide world's annals, you, and take their
wisdom for your friend.

Hope the best, but hold the Present fatal daughter of
the Past,
Shape your heart to front the hour, but dream not that
the hour will last.

Ay, if dynamite and revolver leave you courage to be
wise:

When was age so cramm'd with menace? madness? written, spoken lies?

Envy wears the mask of Love, and, laughing sober fact to scorn,
Cries to Weakest as to Strongest, 'Ye are equals, equal-born.'

Equal-born? O yes, if yonder hill be level with the flat.
Charm us, Orator, till the Lion look no larger than the Cat,

Till the Cat thro' that mirage of overheated language loom
Larger than the Lion,—Demos end in working its own doom.

Russia bursts our Indian barrier, shall we fight her? shall we yield?
Pause! before you sound the trumpet, hear the voices from the field.

Those three hundred millions under one Imperial sceptre now,
Shall we hold them? shall we loose them? take the suffrage of the plow.

Nay, but these would feel and follow Truth if only you and you,
Rivals of realm-ruining party, when you speak were wholly true.

Plowmen, Shepherds, have I found, and more than once, and still could find,
Sons of God, and kings of men in utter nobleness of mind,

Truthful, trustful, looking upward to the practised hustings-liar;
So the Higher wields the Lower, while the Lower is the Higher.

Here and there a cotter's babe is royal-born by right divine;
Here and there my lord is lower than his oxen or his swine.

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! once again the sickening game;
Freedom, free to slay herself, and dying while they shout her name.

Step by step we gain'd a freedom known to Europe, known to all;

Step by step we rose to greatness,—thro' the tongue-
sters we may fall.

You that woo the Voices—tell them 'old experience
is a fool,'
Teach your flatter'd kings that only those who cannot
read can rule.

Pluck the mighty from their seat, but set no meek
ones in their place;
Pillory Wisdom in your markets, pelt your offal at her
face.

Tumble Nature heel o'er head, and, yelling with the
yelling street,
Set the feet above the brain and swear the brain is in
the feet.

Bring the old dark ages back without the faith, with-
out the hope,
Break the State, the Church, the Throne, and roll
their ruins down the slope.

Authors—essayist, atheist, novelist, realist, rhyme-
ster, play your part,
Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living hues
of Art.

Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own foul
passions bare;
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—for-
ward—naked—let them stare.

Feed the budding rose of boyhood with the drainage
of your sewer;
Send the drain into the fountain, lest the stream
should issue pure.

Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of
Zolaism,—
Forward, forward, ay and backward, downward too
into the abysm.

Do your best to charm the worst, to lower the rising
race of men;
Have we risen from out the beast, then back into the
beast again?

Only 'dust to dust' for me that sicken at your lawless
din,
Dust in wholesome old-world dust before the newer
world begin.

Heated am I? you—you wonder—well, it scarce be-
comes mine age—

Patience! let the dying actor mouth his last upon the stage.

Cries of unprogressive dotage ere the dotard fall asleep?
Noises of a current narrowing, not the music of a deep?

Ay, for doubtless I am old, and think gray thoughts, for I am gray:
After all the stormy changes shall we find a changeless May?

After madness, after massacre, Jacobism and Jacquerie,
Some diviner force to guide us thro' the days I shall not see?

When the schemes and all the systems, Kingdoms and Republics fall,
Something kindlier, higher, holier—all for each and each for all?

All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice, Love, and Truth;
All the millions one at length with all the visions of my youth?

All diseases quench'd by Science, no man halt, or deaf or blind;
Stronger ever born of weaker, lustier body, larger mind?

Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single tongue—
I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet so young?—

Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion kill'd,
Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert till'd,

Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she smiles,
Universal ocean softly washing all her warless Isles.

Warless? when her tens are thousands, and her thousands millions, then—
All her harvest all too narrow—who can fancy warless men?

Warless? war will die out late then. Will it ever? late or soon?

Can it, till this outworn earth be dead as yon dead
world the moon?

Dead the new astronomy calls her. . . . On this day
and at this hour,
In this gap between the sandhills, whence you see the
Locksley tower,

Here we met, our latest meeting—Amy—sixty years
ago—
She and I—the moon was falling greenish thro' a rosy
glow,

Just above the gateway tower, and even where you
see her now—
Here we stood and claspt each other, swore the seem-
ing-deathless vow. . . .

Dead, but how her living glory lights the hall, the
dune, the grass!
Yet the moonlight is the sunlight, and the sun himself
will pass.

Venus near her! smiling downward at this earthlier
earth of ours,
Closer on the Sun, perhaps a world of never fading
flowers.

Hesper, whom the poet call'd the Bringer home of
all good things.
All good things may move in Hesper, perfect peoples,
perfect kings.

Hesper—Venus—were we native to that splendour or
in Mars,
We should see the Globe we groan in, fairest of their
evening stars.

Could we dream of wars and carnage, craft and mad-
ness, lust and spite,
Roaring London, raving Paris, in that point of peace-
ful light?

Might we not in glancing heavenward on a star so
silver-fair,
Yearn, and clasp the hands and murmur, 'Would to
God that we were there'?

Forward, backward, backward, forward, in the im-
measurable sea,
Sway'd by vaster ebbs and flows than can be known to
you or me.

All the suns—are these but symbols of innumerable
man,

Man or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner or the plan?

Is there evil but on earth? or pain in every peopled sphere?
Well be grateful for the sounding watchword 'Evolution' here.

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.

What are men that He should heed us? cried the king of sacred song;
Insects of an hour, that hourly work their brother insect wrong,

While the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along their fiery way,
All their planets whirling round them, flash a million miles a day.

Many an Æon moulded earth before her highest, man, was born,
Many an Æon too may pass when earth is manless and forlorn,

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt, and plots of land—

Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of mountain,
grains of sand!

Only That which made us, meant us to be mightier
by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens within
the human eye,

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro' the
human soul;
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless outward, in
the Whole.

* * * * * * * *

Here is Locksley Hall, my grandson, here the lion-
guarded gate.
Not to-night in Locksley Hall—to-morrow—you, you
come so late.

Wreck'd—your train—or all but wreck'd? a shat-
ter'd wheel? a vicious boy!
Good, this forward, you that preach it, is it well to
wish you joy?

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying
in the Time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city
slime?

There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.

There the Master scrimps his haggard sempstress of her daily bread,
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the dead.

There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor.

Nay, your pardon, cry you 'forward,' yours are hope and youth, but I—
Eighty winters leave the dog too lame to follow with the cry,

Lame and old, and past his time, and passing now into the night;
Yet I would the rising race were half as eager for the light.

Light the fading gleam of Even? light the glimmer of the dawn?

Aged eyes may take the growing glimmer for the
gleam withdrawn.

Far away beyond her myriad coming changes earth
will be
Something other than the wildest modern guess of you
and me.

Earth may reach her earthly-worst, or if she gain her
earthly-best,
Would she find her human offspring this ideal man at
rest?

Forward then, but still remember how the course of
Time will swerve,
Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward
streaming curve.

Not the Hall to-night, my grandson! Death and
Silence hold their own.
Leave the Master in the first dark hour of his last
sleep alone.

Worthier soul was he than I am, sound and honest,
rustic Squire,
Kindly landlord, boon companion—youthful jealousy
is a liar.

Cast the poison from your bosom, oust the madness
from your brain.
Let the trampled serpent show you that you have not
lived in vain.

Youthful! youth and age are scholars yet but in the
lower school,
Nor is he the wisest man who never proved himself a
fool.

Yonder lies our young sea-village—Art and Grace are
less and less:
Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of slated
hideousness!

There is one old Hostel left us where they swing the
Locksley shield,
Till the peasant cow shall butt the 'Lion passant'
from his field.

Poor old Heraldry, poor old History, poor old Poetry,
passing hence,
In the common deluge drowning old political com-
mon-sense!

Poor old voice of eighty crying after voices that have
fled!

All I loved are vanish'd voices, all my steps are on the dead.

All the world is ghost to me, and as the phantom disappears,
Forward far and far from here is all the hope of eighty years.

* * * * * * * *

In this Hostel—I remember—I repent it o'er his grave—
Like a clown—by chance he met me—I refused the hand he gave.

From that casement where the trailer mantles all the mouldering bricks—
I was then in early boyhood, Edith but a child of six—

While I shelter'd in this archway from a day of driving showers—
Peept the winsome face of Edith like a flower among the flowers.

Here to-night! the Hall to-morrow, when they toll the Chapel bell!
Shall I hear in one dark room a wailing, 'I have loved thee well.'

Then a peal that shakes the portal—one has come to
claim his bride,
Her that shrank, and put me from her, shriek'd, and
started from my side—

Silent echoes! You, my Leonard, use and not abuse
your day,
Move among your people, know them, follow him who
led the way,

Strove for sixty widow'd years to help his homelier
brother men,
Served the poor, and built the cottage, raised the
school, and drain'd the fen.

Hears he now the Voice that wrong'd him? who shall
swear it cannot be?
Earth would never touch her worst, were one in fifty
such as he.

Ere she gain her Heavenly-best, a God must mingle
with the game:
Nay, there may be those about us whom we neither
see nor name,

Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of Good, the
Powers of Ill,

Strowing balm, or shedding poison in the fountains of the Will.

Follow you the Star that lights a desert pathway, yours or mine.
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is divine.

Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can half-control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb.

Forward, let the stormy moment fly and mingle with the Past.
I that loathed, have come to love him. Love will conquer at the last.

Gone at eighty, mine own age, and I and you will bear the pall;
Then I leave thee Lord and Master, latest Lord of Locksley Hall.

PROLOGUE TO GENERAL HAMLEY.

Our birches yellowing and from each
The light leaf falling fast,
While squirrels from our fiery beech
Were bearing off the mast,
You came, and look'd and loved the view
Long-known and loved by me,
Green Sussex fading into blue
With one gray glimpse of sea;
And, gazing from this height alone,
We spoke of what had been
Most marvellous in the wars your own
Crimean eyes had seen;
And now—like old-world inns that take
Some warrior for a sign
That therewithin a guest may make
True cheer with honest wine—
Because you heard the lines I read
Nor utter'd word of blame,
I dare without your leave to head
These rhymings with your name,

Who know you but as one of those
I fain would meet again,
Yet know you, as your England knows
That you and all your men
Were soldiers to her heart's desire,
When, in the vanish'd year,
You saw the league-long rampart-fire
Flare from Tel-el-Kebir
Thro' darkness, and the foe was driven,
And Wolseley overthrew
Arâbi, and the stars in heaven
Paled, and the glory grew.

THE CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE AT BALACLAVA.

OCTOBER 25, 1854.

I.

THE charge of the gallant three hundred, the Heavy Brigade!
Down the hill, down the hill, thousands of Russians,
Thousands of horsemen, drew to the valley—and stay'd;
For Scarlett and Scarlett's three hundred were riding by
When the points of the Russian lances arose in the sky;
And he call'd 'Left wheel into line!' and they wheel'd and obey'd.
Then he look'd at the host that had halted he knew not why,
And he turn'd half round, and he bad his trumpeter sound
To the charge, and he rode on ahead, as he waved his blade

To the gallant three hundred whose glory will never die—
'Follow,' and up the hill, up the hill, up the hill,
Follow'd the Heavy Brigade.

II.

The trumpet, the gallop, the charge, and the might of the fight!
Thousands of horsemen had gather'd there on the height,
With a wing push'd out to the left and a wing to the right,
And who shall escape if they close? but he dash'd up alone
Thro' the great gray slope of men,
Sway'd his sabre, and held his own
Like an Englishman there and then;
All in a moment follow'd with force
Three that were next in their fiery course,
Wedged themselves in between horse and horse,
Fought for their lives in the narrow gap they had made—
Four amid thousands! and up the hill, up the hill,
Gallopt the gallant three hundred, the Heavy Brigade.

III.

Fell like a cannonshot,
Burst like a thunderbolt,
Crash'd like a hurricane,
Broke thro' the mass from below,
Drove thro' the midst of the foe,
Plunged up and down, to and fro,
Rode flashing blow upon blow,
Brave Inniskillens and Greys
Whirling their sabres in circles of light!
And some of us, all in amaze,
Who were held for a while from the fight,
And were only standing at gaze,
When the dark-muffled Russian crowd
Folded its wings from the left and the right,
And roll'd them around like a cloud,—
O mad for the charge and the battle were we,
When our own good redcoats sank from sight,
Like drops of blood in a dark-gray sea,
And we turn'd to each other, whispering, all dismay'd,
'Lost are the gallant three hundred of Scarlett's Brigade!'

IV.

'Lost one and all' were the words
Mutter'd in our dismay;

But they rode like Victors and Lords
Thro' the forest of lances and swords
In the heart of the Russian hordes,
They rode, or they stood at bay—
Struck with the sword-hand and slew,
Down with the bridle-hand drew
The foe from the saddle and threw
Underfoot there in the fray—
Ranged like a storm or stood like a rock
In the wave of a stormy day;
Till suddenly shock upon shock
Stagger'd the mass from without,
Drove it in wild disarray,
For our men gallopt up with a cheer and a shout,
And the foeman surged, and waver'd, and reel'd
Up the hill, up the hill, up the hill, out of the field,
And over the brow and away.

v.

Glory to each and to all, and the charge that they made!
Glory to all the three hundred, and all the Brigade!

NOTE.—The 'three hundred' of the 'Heavy Brigade' who made this famous charge were the Scots Greys and the 2nd squadron of Inniskillings; the remainder of the 'Heavy Brigade' subsequently dashing up to their support.

The 'three' were Scarlett's aide-de-camp, Elliot, and the trumpeter and Shegog the orderly, who had been close behind him.

EPILOGUE.

IRENE.

NOT this way will you set your name
A star among the stars.

POET.

What way?

IRENE.

You praise when you should blame
The barbarism of wars.
A juster epoch has begun.

POET.

Yet tho' this cheek be gray,
And that bright hair the modern sun,
Those eyes the blue to-day,
You wrong me, passionate little friend.
I would that wars should cease,
I would the globe from end to end
Might sow and reap in peace,

And some new Spirit o'erbear the old,
  Or Trade re-frain the Powers
From war with kindly links of gold,
  Or Love with wreaths of flowers.
Slav, Teuton, Kelt, I count them all
  My friends and brother souls,
With all the peoples, great and small,
  That wheel between the poles.
But since, our mortal shadow, Ill
  To waste this earth began—
Perchance from some abuse of Will
  In worlds before the man
Involving ours—he needs must fight
  To make true peace his own,
He needs must combat might with might,
  Or Might would rule alone;
And who loves War for War's own sake
  Is fool, or crazed, or worse;
But let the patriot-soldier take
  His meed of fame in verse;
Nay—tho' that realm were in the wrong
  For which her warriors bleed,
It still were right to crown with song
  The warrior's noble deed—
A crown the Singer hopes may last,
  For so the deed endures;
But Song will vanish in the Vast;

And that large phrase of yours
'A Star among the stars,' my dear,
Is girlish talk at best;
For dare we dally with the sphere
As he did half in jest,
Old Horace? 'I will strike' said he
'The stars with head sublime,'
But scarce could see, as now we see,
The man in Space and Time,
So drew perchance a happier lot
Than ours, who rhyme to-day.
The fires that arch this dusky dot—
Yon myriad-worlded way—
The vast sun-clusters' gather'd blaze,
World-isles in lonely skies,
Whole heavens within themselves, amaze
Our brief humanities;
And so does Earth; for Homer's fame,
Tho' carved in harder stone—
The falling drop will make his name
As mortal as my own.

IRENE.

No!

POET.

Let it live then—ay, till when?
Earth passes, all is lost

In what they prophesy, our wise men,
  Sun-flame or sunless frost,
And deed and song alike are swept
  Away, and all in vain
As far as man can see, except
  The man himself remain;
And tho', in this lean age forlorn,
  Too many a voice may cry
That man can have no after-morn,
  Not yet of these am I.
The man remains, and whatso'er
  He wrought of good or brave
Will mould him thro' the cycle-year
  That dawns behind the grave.

And here the Singer for his Art
  Not all in vain may plead
'The song that nerves a nation's heart,
  Is in itself a deed.'

TO VIRGIL.

WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF THE MANTUANS FOR THE NINETEENTH CENTENARY OF VIRGIL'S DEATH.

I.

ROMAN VIRGIL, thou that singest
Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,
Ilion falling, Rome arising,
wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre;

II.

Landscape-lover, lord of language
more than he that sang the Works and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden phrase;

III.

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;
All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word;

IV.

Poet of the happy Tityrus
piping underneath his beechen bowers;
Poet of the poet-satyr
whom the laughing shepherd bound with flowers;

V.

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
unlaborious earth and oarless sea;

VI.

Thou that seëst Universal
Nature moved by Universal Mind;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
at the doubtful doom of human kind;

VII.

Light among the vanish'd ages;
star that gildest yet this phantom shore;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
kings and realms that pass to rise no more;

VIII.

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
fallen every purple Cæsar's dome—
Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm
sound for ever of Imperial Rome—

IX.

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
and the Rome of freemen holds her place,
I, from out the Northern Island
sunder'd once from all the human race,

X.

I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my day began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
ever moulded by the lips of man.

THE DEAD PROPHET.

182–.

I.

DEAD!
And the Muses cried with a stormy cry
'Send them no more, for evermore.
Let the people die.'

II.

Dead!
'Is it *he* then brought so low?'
And a careless people flock'd from the fields
With a purse to pay for the show.

III.

Dead, who had served his time,
Was one of the people's kings,
Had labour'd in lifting them out of slime,
And showing them, souls have wings!

IV.

Dumb on the winter heath he lay.
His friends had stript him bare,
And roll'd his nakedness everyway
That all the crowd might stare.

V.

A storm-worn signpost not to be read,
And a tree with a moulder'd nest
On its barkless bones, stood stark by the dead;
And behind him, low in the West,

VI.

With shifting ladders of shadow and light,
And blurr'd in colour and form,
The sun hung over the gates of Night,
And glared at a coming storm.

VII.

Then glided a vulturous Beldam forth,
That on dumb death had thriven;
They call'd her 'Reverence' here upon earth,
And 'The Curse of the Prophet' in Heaven.

VIII.

She knelt—'We worship him'—all but wept—
'So great so noble was he!'
She clear'd her sight, she arose, she swept
The dust of earth from her knee.

IX.

'Great! for he spoke and the people heard,
And his eloquence caught like a flame
From zone to zone of the world, till his Word
Had won him a noble name.

X.

'Noble! he sung, and the sweet sound ran
Thro' palace and cottage door,
For he touch'd on the whole sad planet of man,
The kings and the rich and the poor;

XI.

'And he sung not alone of an old sun set,
But a sun coming up in his youth!
Great and noble—O yes—but yet—
For man is a lover of Truth,

XII.

'And bound to follow, wherever she go
Stark-naked, and up or down,
Thro' her high hill-passes of stainless snow,
Or the foulest sewer of the town—

XIII.

'Noble and great—O ay—but then,
Tho' a prophet should have his due,
Was he noblier-fashion'd than other men?
Shall we see to it, I and you?

XIV.

'For since he would sit on a Prophet's seat,
As a lord of the Human soul,
We needs must scan him from head to feet
Were it but for a wart or a mole?'

XV.

His wife and his child stood by him in tears,
But she—she push'd them aside.
'Tho' a name may last for a thousand years,
Yet a truth is a truth,' she cried.

XVI.

And she that had haunted his pathway still,
Had often truckled and cower'd
When he rose in his wrath, and had yielded her will
To the master, as overpower'd,

XVII.

She tumbled his helpless corpse about.
'Small blemish upon the skin!
But I think we know what is fair without
Is often as foul within.'

XVIII.

She crouch'd, she tore him part from part,
And out of his body she drew
The red 'Blood-eagle'[1] of liver and heart;
She held them up to the view;

XIX.

She gabbled, as she groped in the dead,
And all the people were pleased;

[1] Old Viking term for lungs, liver, etc., when torn by the conqueror out of the body of the conquered.

'See, what a little heart,' she said,
'And the liver is half-diseased!'

XX.

She tore the Prophet after death,
And the people paid her well.
Lightnings flicker'd along the heath;
One shriek'd 'The fires of Hell!'

EARLY SPRING.

ONCE more the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,
And domes the red-plow'd hills
With loving blue;
The blackbirds have their wills,
The throstles too.

II.

Opens a door in Heaven;
From skies of glass
A Jacob's ladder falls
On greening grass,
And o'er the mountain-walls
Young angels pass.

III.

Before them fleets the shower,
And burst the buds,

And shine the level lands,
  And flash the floods;
The stars are from their hands
  Flung thro' the woods,

IV.

The woods with living airs
  How softly fann'd,
Light airs from where the deep,
  All down the sand,
Is breathing in his sleep,
  Heard by the land.

V.

O follow, leaping blood,
  The season's lure!
O heart, look down and up
  Serene, secure,
Warm as the crocus cup,
  Like snowdrops, pure!

VI.

Past, Future glimpse and fade
  Thro' some slight spell,
A gleam from yonder vale,
  Some far blue fell,

And sympathies, how frail,
In sound and smell!

VII.

Till at thy chuckled note,
Thou twinkling bird,
The fairy fancies range,
And, lightly stirr'd,
Ring little bells of change
From word to word.

VIII.

For now the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new,
And thaws the cold, and fills
The flower with dew;
The blackbirds have their wills,
The poets too.

PREFATORY POEM TO MY BROTHER'S SONNETS.

Midnight, June 30, 1879.

I.

MIDNIGHT—in no midsummer tune
The breakers lash the shores:
The cuckoo of a joyless June
Is calling out of doors:

And thou hast vanish'd from thine own
To that which looks like rest,
True brother, only to be known
By those who love thee best.

II.

Midnight—and joyless June gone by,
And from the deluged park
The cuckoo of a worse July
Is calling thro' the dark:

But thou art silent underground,
And o'er thee streams the rain,
True poet, surely to be found
When Truth is found again.

III.

And, now to these unsummer'd skies
The summer bird is still,
Far off a phantom cuckoo cries
From out a phantom hill;

And thro' this midnight breaks the sun
Of sixty years away,
The light of days when life begun,
The days that seem to-day,

When all my griefs were shared with thee,
As all my hopes were thine—
As all thou wert was one with me,
May all thou art be mine!

'FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE.'

Row us out from Desenzano, to your Sirmione row!
So they row'd, and there we landed—'O venusta Sirmio!'
There to me thro' all the groves of olive in the summer glow,
There beneath the Roman ruin where the purple flowers grow,
Came that 'Ave atque Vale' of the Poet's hopeless woe,
Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen-hundred years ago,
'Frater Ave atque Vale'—as we wander'd to and fro
Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the Garda Lake below
Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio!

HELEN'S TOWER.[1]

HELEN'S TOWER, here I stand,
Dominant over sea and land
Son's love built me, and I hold
Mother's love in letter'd gold.
Love is in and out of time,
I am mortal stone and lime.
Would my granite girth were strong
As either love, to last as long!
I should wear my crown entire
To and thro' the Doomsday fire,
And be found of angel eyes
In earth's recurring Paradise.

[1] Written at the request of my friend, Lord Dufferin.

EPITAPH ON LORD STRATFORD DE REDCLIFFE.

IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

THOU third great Canning, stand among our best
  And noblest, now thy long day's work hath ceased,
Here silent in our Minster of the West
  Who wert the voice of England in the East

EPITAPH ON GENERAL GORDON.

IN THE GORDON BOYS' NATIONAL MEMORIAL HOME NEAR WOKING.

WARRIOR of God, man's friend, and tyrant's foe,
Now somewhere dead far in the waste Soudan,
Thou livest in all hearts, for all men know
This earth has never borne a nobler man.

EPITAPH ON CAXTON.

In St. Margaret's, Westminster.

Fiat Lux (his motto).

Thy prayer was 'Light—more Light—while Time
shall last!'
Thou sawest a glory growing on the night,
But not the shadows which that light would cast,
Till shadows vanish in the Light of Light.

TO THE DUKE OF ARGYLL.

O PATRIOT Statesman, be thou wise to know
The limits of resistance, and the bounds
Determining concession; still be bold
Not only to slight praise but suffer scorn;
And be thy heart a fortress to maintain
The day against the moment, and the year
Against the day; thy voice, a music heard
Thro' all the yells and counter-yells of feud
And faction, and thy will, a power to make
This ever-changing world of circumstance,
In changing, chime with never-changing Law.

HANDS ALL ROUND.

FIRST pledge our Queen this solemn night,
  Then drink to England, every guest;
That man's the best Cosmopolite
  Who loves his native country best.
May freedom's oak for ever live
  With stronger life from day to day;
That man's the true Conservative
  Who lops the moulder'd branch away.
    Hands all round!
  God the traitor's hope confound!
To this great cause of Freedom drink, my friends,
  And the great name of England, round and round.

To all the loyal hearts who long
  To keep our English Empire whole!
To all our noble sons, the strong
  New England of the Southern Pole!
To England under Indian skies,
  To those dark millions of her realm!

To Canada whom we love and prize,
Whatever statesman hold the helm.
Hands all round!
God the traitor's hope confound!
To this great name of England drink, my friends,
And all her glorious empire, round and round.

To all our statesmen so they be
True leaders of the land's desire!
To both our Houses, may they see
Beyond the borough and the shire!
We sail'd wherever ship could sail,
We founded many a mighty state;
Pray God our greatness may not fail
Thro' craven fears of being great.
Hands all round!
God the traitor's hope confound!
To this great cause of Freedom drink, my friends,
And the great name of England, round and round.

FREEDOM.

I.

O THOU so fair in summers gone,
While yet thy fresh and virgin soul
Inform'd the pillar'd Parthenon,
The glittering Capitol;

II.

So fair in southern sunshine bathed,
But scarce of such majestic mien
As here with forehead vapour-swathed
In meadows ever green;

III.

For thou—when Athens reign'd and Rome,
Thy glorious eyes were dimm'd with pain
To mark in many a freeman's home
The slave, the scourge, the chain;

IV.

O follower of the Vision, still
In motion to the distant gleam,
Howe'er blind force and brainless will
May jar thy golden dream

V.

Of Knowledge fusing class with class,
Of civic Hate no more to be,
Of Love to leaven all the mass,
Till every Soul be free;

VI.

Who yet, like Nature, wouldst not mar
By changes all too fierce and fast
This order of Her Human Star,
This heritage of the past;

VII.

O scorner of the party cry
That wanders from the public good,
Thou—when the nations rear on high
Their idol smear'd with blood,

VIII.

And when they roll their idol down—
  Of saner worship sanely proud;
Thou loather of the lawless crown
  As of the lawless crowd;

IX.

How long thine ever-growing mind
  Hath still'd the blast and strown the wave,
Tho' some of late would raise a wind
  To sing thee to thy grave,

X.

Men loud against all forms of power—
  Unfurnish'd brows, tempestuous tongues—
Expecting all things in an hour—
  Brass mouths and iron lungs!

TO H.R.H. PRINCESS BEATRICE.

Two Suns of Love make day of human life,
Which else with all its pains, and griefs, and deaths,
Were utter darkness—one, the Sun of dawn
That brightens thro' the Mother's tender eyes,
And warms the child's awakening world—and one
The later-rising Sun of spousal Love,
Which from her household orbit draws the child
To move in other spheres. The Mother weeps
At that white funeral of the single life,
Her maiden daughter's marriage; and her tears
Are half of pleasure, half of pain—the child
Is happy—ev'n in leaving *her!* but Thou,
True daughter, whose all-faithful, filial eyes
Have seen the loneliness of earthly thrones,
Wilt neither quit the widow'd Crown, nor let
This later light of Love have risen in vain,
But moving thro' the Mother's home, between
The two that love thee, lead a summer life,
Sway'd by each Love, and swaying to each Love,
Like some conjectured planet in mid heaven
Between two Suns, and drawing down from both
The light and genial warmth of double day.

THE FLEET.[1]

I.

You, you, *if* you shall fail to understand
What England is, and what her all-in-all,
On you will come the curse of all the land,
Should this old England fall
Which Nelson left so great.

[1] The speaker said that 'he should like to be assured that other outlying portions of the Empire, the Crown colonies, and important coaling stations were being as promptly and as thoroughly fortified as the various capitals of the self-governing colonies. He was credibly informed this was not so. It was impossible, also, not to feel some degree of anxiety about the efficacy of present provision to defend and protect, by means of swift well-armed cruisers, the immense mercantile fleet of the Empire. A third source of anxiety, so far as the colonies were concerned, was the apparently insufficient provision for the rapid manufacture of armaments and their prompt despatch when ordered to their colonial destination. Hence the necessity for manufacturing appliances equal to the requirements, not of Great Britain alone, but of the whole Empire. But the keystone of the whole was the necessity for an overwhelmingly powerful fleet and efficient defence for all necessary coaling stations. This was as essential for the colonies as for Great Britain. It was the one condition for the continuance of the Empire. All that Continental Powers did with respect to armies England should effect with her navy. It was essentially a defensive force, and could be moved rapidly from point to point, but it should be

II.

His isle, the mightiest Ocean-power on earth,
Our own fair isle, the lord of every sea—
Her fuller franchise—what would that be worth—
Her ancient fame of Free—
Were she . . . a fallen state?

III.

Her dauntless army scatter'd, and so small,
Her island-myriads fed from alien lands—
The fleet of England is her all-in-all;
Her fleet is in your hands,
And in her fleet her Fate.

IV.

You, you, that have the ordering of her fleet,
If you should only compass her disgrace,
When all men starve, the wild mob's million feet
Will kick you from your place,
But then too late, too late.

equal to all that was expected from it. It was to strengthen the fleet that colonists would first readily tax themselves, because they realised how essential a powerful fleet was to the safety, not only of that extensive commerce sailing in every sea, but ultimately to the security of the distant portions of the Empire. Who could estimate the loss involved in even a brief period of disaster to the Imperial Navy? Any amount of money timely expended in preparation would be quite insignificant when compared with the possible calamity he had referred to.'—*Extract from Sir Graham Berry's Speech at the Colonial Institute, 9th November* 1886.

OPENING OF THE INDIAN AND COLONIAL EXHIBITION BY THE QUEEN.

Written at the Request of the Prince of Wales.

I.

WELCOME, welcome with one voice!
In your welfare we rejoice,
Sons and brothers that have sent,
From isle and cape and continent,
Produce of your field and flood,
Mount and mine, and primal wood;
Works of subtle brain and hand,
And splendours of the morning land,
Gifts from every British zone;
Britons, hold your own!

II.

May we find, as ages run,
The mother featured in the son;
And may yours for ever be
That old strength and constancy

Which has made your fathers great
In our ancient island State,
And wherever her flag fly,
Glorying between sea and sky,
Makes the might of Britain known;
Britons, hold your own!

III.

Britain fought her sons of yore—
Britain fail'd; and never more,
Careless of our growing kin,
Shall we sin our fathers' sin,
Men that in a narrower day—
Unprophetic rulers they—
Drove from out the mother's nest
That young eagle of the West
To forage for herself alone;
Britons, hold your own!

IV.

Sharers of our glorious past,
Brothers, must we part at last?
Shall we not thro' good and ill
Cleave to one another still?
Britain's myriad voices call,

'Sons, be welded each and all,
Into one imperial whole,
One with Britain, heart and soul!
One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne!
Britons, hold your own!

POETS AND THEIR BIBLIOGRAPHIES.

OLD poets foster'd under friendlier skies,
  Old Virgil who would write ten lines, they say,
  At dawn, and lavish all the golden day
To make them wealthier in his readers' eyes;
And you, old popular Horace, you the wise
  Adviser of the nine-years-ponder'd lay,
  And you, that wear a wreath of sweeter bay,
Catullus, whose dead songster never dies;
If, glancing downward on the kindly sphere
  That once had roll'd you round and round the Sun,
  You see your Art still shrined in human shelves,
You should be jubilant that you flourish'd here
  Before the Love of Letters, overdone,
Had swampt the sacred poets with themselves.

TO W. C. MACREADY.

1851.

FAREWELL, Macready, since to-night we part;
Full-handed thunders often have confessed
Thy power, well-used to move the public breast.
We thank thee with our voice, and from the heart.
Farewell, Macready, since this night we part,
Go, take thine honours home; rank with the best,
Garrick and statelier Kemble, and the rest
Who made a nation purer through their art.
Thine is it that our drama did not die,
Nor flicker down to brainless pantomime,
And those gilt gauds men-children swarm to see.
Farewell, Macready; moral, grave, sublime;
Our Shakespeare's bland and universal eye
Dwells pleased, through twice a hundred years,
on thee.

THE PROMISE OF MAY

'A surface man of theories, true to none.'

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FARMER DOBSON.

MR. PHILIP EDGAR (*afterwards* MR. HAROLD).

FARMER STEER (DORA *and* EVA'S *Father*).

MR. WILSON (*a Schoolmaster*).

HIGGINS
JAMES
DAN SMITH
JACKSON
ALLEN
} *Farm Labourers.*

DORA STEER.

EVA STEER.

SALLY ALLEN
MILLY
} *Farm Servants.*

Farm Servants, Labourers, etc.

THE PROMISE OF MAY.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Before Farmhouse.*

Farming Men and Women. Farming Men carrying forms, etc., Women carrying baskets of knives and forks, etc.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Be thou a-gawin' to the long barn?

2ND FARMING MAN.

Ay, to be sewer! Be thou?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Why, o' coorse, fur it be the owd man's birthdaäy. He be heighty this very daäy, and 'e telled all on us to be i' the long barn by one o'clock, fur he'll gie us a big dinner, and haäfe th' parish 'll be theer, an' Miss Dora, an' Miss Eva, an' all!

2ND FARMING MAN.

Miss Dora be coomed back, then?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Ay, haäfe an hour ago. She be in theer now. (*Pointing to house.*) Owd Steer wur afeärd she wouldn't be back i' time to keep his birthdaäy, and he wur in a tew about it all the murnin'; and he sent me wi' the gig to Littlechester to fetch 'er; and 'er an' the owd man they fell a kissin' o' one another like two sweet'arts i' the poorch as soon as he clapt eyes of 'er.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Foälks says he likes Miss Eva the best.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Naäy, I knaws nowt o' what foälks says, an' I caäres nowt neither. Foälks doesn't hallus knaw thessens; but sewer I be, they be two o' the purtiest gels ye can see of a summer murnin'.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Beänt Miss Eva gone off a bit of 'er good looks o' laäte?

1ST FARMING MAN.

Noä, not a bit.

2ND FARMING MAN.

Why coöm awaäy, then, to the long barn.

[*Exeunt.*

DORA *looks out of window. Enter* DOBSON.

DORA (*singing*).

The town lay still in the low sun-light,
The hen cluckt late by the white farm gate,
The maid to her dairy came in from the cow,
The stock-dove coo'd at the fall of night,
The blossom had open'd on every bough;
O joy for the promise of May, of May,
O joy for the promise of May.

(*Nodding at* DOBSON.) I'm coming down, Mr. Dobson. I haven't seen Eva yet. Is she anywhere in the garden?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss. I ha'n't seed 'er neither.

DORA (*enters singing*).

But a red fire woke in the heart of the town,
And a fox from the glen ran away with the hen,

And a cat to the cream, and a rat to the cheese;
And the stock-dove coo'd, till a kite dropt down,
And a salt wind burnt the blossoming trees;
O grief for the promise of May, of May,
O grief for the promise of May.

I don't know why I sing that song; I don't love it.

DOBSON.

Blessings on your pretty voice, Miss Dora. Wheer did they larn ye that?

DORA.

In Cumberland, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

An' how did ye leäve the owd uncle i' Coomberland?

DORA.

Getting better, Mr. Dobson. But he'll never be the same man again.

DOBSON.

An' how d'ye find the owd man 'ere?

DORA.

As well as ever. I came back to keep his birthday.

DOBSON.

Well, I be coomed to keep his birthdaäy an' all. The owd man be heighty to-daäy, beänt he?

DORA.

Yes, Mr. Dobson. And the day's bright like a friend, but the wind east like an enemy. Help me to move this bench for him into the sun. (*They move bench.*) No, not that way—here, under the apple tree. Thank you. Look how full of rosy blossom it is. [*Pointing to apple tree.*

DOBSON.

Theer be redder blossoms nor them, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Where do they blow, Mr. Dobson?

DOBSON.

Under your eyes, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Do they?

DOBSON.

And your eyes be as blue as——

DORA.

What, Mr. Dobson? A butcher's frock?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as——

DORA.

Bluebell, harebell, speedwell, bluebottle, succory, forget-me-not?

DOBSON.

Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as——

DORA.

The sky? or the sea on a blue day?

DOBSON.

Naäy then. I meän'd they be as blue as violets.

DORA.

Are they?

DOBSON.

Theer ye goäs ageän, Miss, niver believing owt I says to ye—hallus a-fobbing ma off, tho' ye knaws I love ye. I warrants ye'll think moor o' this young Squire Edgar as ha' coomed among us—the Lord knaws how—ye'll think more on 'is little finger than hall my hand at the haltar.

DORA.

Perhaps, Master Dobson. I can't tell, for I have never seen him. But my sister wrote that he was mighty pleasant, and had no pride in him.

DOBSON.

He'll be arter you now, Miss Dora.

DORA.

Will he? How can I tell?

DOBSON.

He's been arter Miss Eva, haän't he?

DORA.

Not that I know.

DOBSON.

Didn't I spy 'em a-sitting i' the woodbine harbour togither?

DORA.

What of that? Eva told me that he was taking her likeness. He's an artist.

DOBSON.

What's a hartist? I doänt believe he's iver a 'eart under his waistcoat. And I tells ye what, Miss Dora: he's no respect for the Queen, or the parson, or the justice o' peace, or owt. I ha' heärd 'im a-gawin' on 'ud make your 'air—God bless it!—stan' on end. And wuss nor that. When theer wur a meeting o' farmers at Littlechester t'other daäy, and they was all a-crying out at the bad times, he cooms up, and he calls out among our oän men, 'The land belongs to the people!'

DORA.

And what did *you* say to that?

DOBSON.

Well, I says, s'pose my pig's the land, and you says it belongs to the parish, and theer be a thousand i' the parish, taäkin' in the women and childer; and s'pose I kills my pig, and gi'es it among 'em, why there wudn't be a dinner for nawbody, and I should ha' lost the pig.

DORA.

And what did he say to that?

DOBSON.

Nowt—what could he saäy? But I taäkes 'im fur a bad lot and a burn fool, and I haätes the very sight on him.

DORA.

(*Looking at* DOBSON.) Master Dobson, you are a comely man to look at.

DOBSON.

I thank you for that, Miss Dora, onyhow.

DORA.

Ay, but you turn right ugly when you're in an ill temper; and I promise you that if you forget yourself

in your behaviour to this gentleman, my father's friend, I will never change word with you again.

Enter FARMING MAN *from barn.*

FARMING MAN.

Miss, the farming men 'ull hev their dinner i' the long barn, and the master 'ud be straänge an' pleased if you'd step in fust, and see that all be right and reg'lar fur 'em afoor he coöm. [*Exit.*

DORA.

I go. Master Dobson, did you hear what I said?

DOBSON.

Yeas, yeas! I'll not meddle wi' 'im if he doänt meddle wi' meä. (*Exit* DORA.) Coomly, says she. I niver thowt o' mysen i' that waäy; but if she'd taäke to ma i' that waäy, or ony waäy, I'd slaäve out my life fur 'er. 'Coomly to look at,' says she—but she said it spiteful-like. To look at—yeas, 'coomly'; and she mayn't be so fur out theer. But if that be nowt to she, then it be nowt to me. (*Looking off stage.*) Schoolmaster! Why if Steer han't haxed schoolmaster to dinner, thaw 'e knaws I was hallus

ageän heving schoolmaster i' the parish! fur him as be handy wi' a book bean't but haäfe a hand at a pitchfork.

Enter WILSON.

Well, Wilson. I seed that one cow o' thine i' the pinfold ageän as I wur a-coomin' 'ere.

WILSON.

Very likely, Mr. Dobson. She *will* break fence. I can't keep her in order.

DOBSON.

An' if tha can't keep thy one cow i' horder, how can tha keep all thy scholards i' horder? But let that goä by. What dost a knaw o' this Mr. Hedgar as be a-lodgin' wi' ye? I coom'd upon 'im t'other daäy lookin' at the coontry, then a-scrattin upon a bit o' paäper, then a-lookin' agean; and I taäked 'im fur soom sort of a land-surveyor—but a beänt.

WILSON.

He's a Somersetshire man, and a very civil-spoken gentleman.

DOBSON.

Gentleman! What be he a-doing here ten mile an' moor fro' a raäil? We laäys out o' the waäy fur gentlefoälk altogither—leästwaäys they niver cooms 'ere but fur the trout i' our beck, fur they be knaw'd as far as Littlechester. But 'e doänt fish neither.

WILSON.

Well, it's no sin in a gentleman not to fish.

DOBSON.

Noä, but I haätes 'im.

WILSON.

Better step out of his road, then, for he's walking to us, and with a book in his hand.

DOBSON.

An' I haätes booöks an' all, fur they puts foälk off the owd waäys.

Enter EDGAR, *reading—not seeing* DOBSON *and* WILSON.

EDGAR.

This author, with his charm of simple style
And close dialectic, all but proving man

An automatic series of sensations,
Has often numb'd me into apathy
Against the unpleasant jolts of this rough road
That breaks off short into the abysses—made me
A Quietest taking all things easily.

DOBSON.

(*Aside.*) There mun be summut wrong theer, Wilson, fur I doänt understan' it.

WILSON.

(*Aside.*) Nor I either, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

(*Scornfully.*) An' thou doänt understan' it neither —and thou schoolmaster an' all.

EDGAR.

What can a man, then, live for but sensations,
Pleasant ones? men of old would undergo
Unpleasant for the sake of pleasant ones
Hereafter, like the Moslem beauties waiting
To clasp their lovers by the golden gates.
For me, whose cheerless Houris after death
Are Night and Silence, pleasant ones—the while—
If possible, here! to crop the flower and pass.

DOBSON.

Well, I never 'eärd the likes o' that afoor.

WILSON.

(*Aside.*) But I have, Mr. Dobson. It's the old Scripture text, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' I'm sorry for it, for, tho' he never comes to church, I thought better of him.

EDGAR.

'What are we?' says the blind old man in Lear;
'As flies to the Gods; they kill us for their sport.'

DOBSON.

(*Aside.*) Then the owd man i' Lear should be shaämed of hissen, but noän o' the parishes goäs by that naäme 'ereabouts.

EDGAR.

The Gods! but they, the shadows of ourselves,
Have past for ever. It is Nature kills,
And not for *her* sport either. She knows nothing.
Man only knows, the worse for him! for why
Cannot *he* take his pastime like the flies?

And if my pleasure breed another's pain,
Well—is not that the course of Nature too,
From the dim dawn of Being—her main law
Whereby she grows in beauty—that her flies
Must massacre each other? this poor Nature!

DOBSON.

Natur! Natur! Well, it be i' *my* natur to knock 'im o' the 'eäd now; but I weänt.

EDGAR.

A Quietest taking all things easily—why—
Have I been dipping into this again
To steel myself against the leaving her?
(*Closes book, seeing* WILSON.)
Good day!

WILSON.

Good day, sir.

(DOBSON *looks hard at* EDGAR.)

EDGAR.

(*To* DOBSON.) Have I the pleasure, friend, of knowing you?

DOBSON.

Dobson.

EDGAR.

Good day, then, Dobson. [*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Good daäy then, Dobson!' Civil-spoken i'deed! Why, Wilson, tha 'eärd 'im thysen—the feller couldn't find a Mister in his mouth fur me, as farms five hoonderd haäcre.

WILSON.

You never find one for me, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

Noä, fur thou be nobbut schoolmaster; but I taäkes 'im fur a Lunnun swindler, and a burn fool.

WILSON.

He can hardly be both, and he pays me regular every Saturday.

DOBSON.

Yeas; but I haätes 'im.

Enter STEER, FARM MEN *and* WOMEN.

STEER.

(*Goes and sits under apple tree.*) Hev ony o' ye seen Eva?

DOBSON.

Noä, Mr. Steer.

STEER.

Well, I reckons they'll hev a fine cider-crop to-year if the blossom 'owds. Good murnin', neighbours, and the saäme to you, my men. I taäkes it kindly of all o' you that you be coomed—what's the newspaäper word, Wilson?—celebrate—to celebrate my birthdaäy i' this fashion. Niver man 'ed better friends, and I will saäy niver master 'ed better men: fur thaw I may ha' fallen out wi' ye sometimes, the fault, mebbe, wur as much mine as yours; and, thaw I says it mysen, niver men 'ed a better master—and I knaws what men be, and what masters be, fur I wur nobbut a laäbourer, and now I be a landlord—burn a plowman, and now, as far as money goäs, I be a gentleman, thaw I beänt naw scholard, fur I 'edn't naw time to maäke mysen a scholard while I wur maäkin' mysen a gentleman, but I ha' taäen good care to turn out boäth my darters right down fine laädies.

DOBSON.

An' soä they be.

1ST FARMING MAN.

Soä they be! soä they be!

2ND FARMING MAN.

The Lord bless boath on 'em!

3RD FARMING MAN.

An' the saäme to you, Master.

4TH FARMING MAN.

And long life to boath on 'em. An' the saäme to you, Master Steer, likewise.

STEER.

Thank ye!

Enter EVA.

Wheer 'asta been?

EVA.

(*Timidly.*) Many happy returns of the day, father.

STEER.

They can't be many, my dear, but I 'oäpes they'll be 'appy.

DOBSON.

Why, tha looks haäle anew to last to a hoonderd.

STEER.

An' why shouldn't I last to a hoonderd? Haäle! why shouldn't I be haäle? fur thaw I be heighty this

very daäy, I niver 'es sa much as one pin's prick of paäin; an' I can taäke my glass along wi' the youngest, fur I niver touched a drop of owt till my oän wedding-daäy, an' then I wur turned huppads o' sixty. Why shouldn't I be haäle? I ha' plowed the ten-aäcre—it be mine now—afoor ony o' ye wur burn —ye all knaws the ten-aäcre—I mun ha' plowed it moor nor a hoonderd times; hallus hup at sunrise, and I'd drive the plow straäit as a line right i' the faäce o' the sun, then back ageän, a-follering my oän shadder—then hup ageän i' the faäce o' the sun. Eh! how the sun 'ud shine, and the larks 'ud sing i' them daäys, and the smell o' the mou'd an' all. Eh! if I could ha' gone on wi' the plowin' nobbut the smell o' the mou'd 'ud ha' maäde ma live as long as Jerusalem.

EVA.

Methusaleh, father.

STEER.

Ay, lass, but when thou be as owd as me thou'll put one word fur another as I does.

DOBSON.

But, Steer, thaw thou be haäle anew I seed tha a-limpin' up just now wi' the roomatics i' the knee.

STEER.

Roomatics! Noä; I laäme't my knee last night running arter a thief. Beänt there house-breäkers down i' Littlechester, Dobson—doänt ye hear of ony?

DOBSON.

Ay, that there be. Immanuel Goldsmiths was broke into o' Monday night, and ower a hoonderd pounds worth o' rings stolen.

STEER.

So I thowt, and I heärd the winder—that's the winder at the end o' the passage, that goäs by thy chaumber. (*Turning to* EVA.) Why, lass, what maäkes tha sa red? Did 'e git into thy chaumber?

EVA.

Father!

STEER.

Well, I runned arter thief i' the dark, and fell ageän coalscuttle and my kneeä gev waäy, or I'd ha' cotched 'im, but afoor I coomed up he got thruff the winder ageän.

EVA.

Got thro' the window again?

STEER.

Ay, but he left the mark of 'is foot i' the flower-bed; now theer be noän o' my men, thinks I to mysen, 'ud ha' done it 'cep' it were Dan Smith, fur I cotched 'im once a-steälin' coäls an' I sent fur 'im, an' I measured his foot wi' the mark i' the bed, but it wouldn't fit—seeäms to me the mark wur maäde by a Lunnun boot. (*Looks at* EVA.) Why, now, what maäkes tha sa white?

EVA.

Fright, father!

STEER.

Maäke thysen eäsy. I'll hev the winder naäiled up, and put Towser under it.

EVA.

(*Clasping her hands.*) No, no, father! Towser'll tear him all to pieces.

STEER.

Let him keep awaäy, then; but coom, coom! let's be gawin. They ha' broached a barrel of aäle i' the

long barn, and the fiddler be theer, and the lads and lasses 'ull hev a dance.

EVA.

(*Aside.*) Dance! small heart have I to dance. I should seem to be dancing upon a grave.

STEER.

Wheer be Mr. Edgar? about the premises?

DOBSON.

Hallus about the premises!

STEER.

So much the better, so much the better. I likes 'im, and Eva likes 'im. Eva can do owt wi' 'im; look for 'im, Eva, and bring 'im to the barn. He 'ant naw pride in 'im, and we'll git 'im to speechify for us arter dinner.

EVA.

Yes, father! [*Exit.*

STEER.

Coom along then, all the rest o' ye! Churchwarden be a coomin, thaw me and 'im we niver 'grees about

the tithe; and Parson mebbe, thaw he niver mended that gap i' the glebe fence as I telled 'im; and Blacksmith, thaw he niver shoes a herse to my likings; and Baäker, thaw I sticks to hoäm-maäde—but all on 'em welcome, all on 'em welcome; and I've hed the long barn cleared out of all the machines, and the sacks, and the taäters, and the mangles, and theer'll be room anew for all o' ye. Foller me.

ALL.

Yeas, yeas! Three cheers for Mr. Steer!

[*All exeunt except* DOBSON *into barn.*

Enter EDGAR.

DOBSON (*who is going, turns*).

Squire!—if so be you be a squire.

EDGAR.

Dobbins, I think.

DOBSON.

Dobbins, you thinks; and I thinks ye weärs a Lunnun boot.

EDGAR.

Well?

DOBSON.

And I thinks I'd like to taäke the measure o' your foot.

EDGAR.

Ay, if you'd like to measure your own length upon the grass.

DOBSON.

Coom, coom, that's a good un. Why, I could throw four o' ye; but I promised one of the Misses I wouldn't meddle wi' ye, and I weänt.

[*Exit into barn.*

EDGAR.

Jealous of me with Eva! Is it so?
Well, tho' I grudge the pretty jewel, that I
Have worn, to such a clod, yet that might be
The best way out of it, if the child could keep
Her counsel. I am sure I wish her happy.
But I must free myself from this entanglement.
I have all my life before me—so has she—
Give her a month or two, and her affections
Will flower toward the light in some new face.
Still I am half-afraid to meet her now.
She will urge marriage on me. I hate tears.

Marriage is but an old tradition. I hate
Traditions, ever since my narrow father,
After my frolic with his tenant's girl,
Made younger elder son, violated the whole
Tradition of our land, and left his heir,
Born, happily, with some sense of art, to live
By brush and pencil. By and by, when Thought
Comes down among the crowd, and man perceives that
The lost gleam of an after-life but leaves him
A beast of prey in the dark, why then the crowd
May wreak my wrongs upon my wrongers. Marriage!
That fine, fat, hook-nosed uncle of mine, old Harold,
Who leaves me all his land at Littlechester,
He, too, would oust me from his will, if I
Made such a marriage. And marriage in itself—
The storm is hard at hand will sweep away
Thrones, churches, ranks, traditions, customs, marriage
One of the feeblest! Then the man, the woman,
Following their best affinities, will each
Bid their old bond farewell with smiles, not tears;
Good wishes, not reproaches; with no fear
Of the world's gossiping clamour, and no need
Of veiling their desires.

Conventionalism,

Who shrieks by day at what she does by night,
Would call this vice; but one time's vice may be
The virtue of another; and Vice and Virtue
Are but two masks of self; and what hereafter
Shall mark out Vice from Virtue in the gulf
Of never-dawning darkness?

Enter EVA.

My sweet Eva,
Where have you lain in ambush all the morning?
They say your sister, Dora, has return'd,
And that should make you happy, if you love her!
But you look troubled.

EVA.

Oh, I love her so,
I was afraid of her, and I hid myself.
We never kept a secret from each other;
She would have seen at once into my trouble,
And ask'd me what I could not answer. Oh, Philip,
Father heard you last night. Our savage mastiff,
That all but kill'd the beggar, will be placed
Beneath the window, Philip.

EDGAR.

Savage, is he?
What matters? Come, give me your hand and kiss me
This beautiful May-morning.

EVA.

The most beautiful
May we have had for many years!

EDGAR.

And here
Is the most beautiful morning of this May.
Nay, you must smile upon me! There—you make
The May and morning still more beautiful,
You, the most beautiful blossom of the May.

EVA.

Dear Philip, all the world is beautiful
If we were happy, and could chime in with it.

EDGAR.

True; for the senses, love, are for the world;
That for the senses.

EVA.

Yes.

EDGAR.

And when the man,
The child of evolution, flings aside
His swaddling-bands, the morals of the tribe,

He, following his own instincts as his God,
Will enter on the larger golden age;
No pleasure then taboo'd: for when the tide
Of full democracy has overwhelm'd
This Old world, from that flood will rise the New,
Like the Love-goddess, with no bridal veil,
Ring, trinket of the Church, but naked Nature
In all her loveliness.

EVA.

What are you saying?

EDGAR.

That, if we did not strain to make ourselves
Better and higher than Nature, we might be
As happy as the bees there at their honey
In these sweet blossoms.

EVA.

Yes; how sweet they smell!

EDGAR.

There! let me break some off for you.

[*Breaking branch off.*

EVA.

My thanks.
But, look, how wasteful of the blossom you are!

One, two, three, four, five, six—you have robb'd
poor father
Of ten good apples. Oh, I forgot to tell you
He wishes you to dine along with us,
And speak for him after—you that are so clever!

EDGAR.

I grieve I cannot; but, indeed——

EVA.

What is it?

EDGAR.

Well, business. I must leave you, love, to-day.

EVA.

Leave me, to-day! And when will you return?

EDGAR.

I cannot tell precisely; but——

EVA.

But what?

EDGAR.

I trust, my dear, we shall be always friends.

EVA.

After all that has gone between us—friends!
What, only friends? [*Drops branch.*

EDGAR.

All that has gone between us
Should surely make us friends.

EVA.

But keep us lovers.

EDGAR.

Child, do you love me now?

EVA.

Yes, now and ever.

EDGAR.

Then you should wish us both to love for ever.
But, if you *will* bind love to one for ever,
Altho' at first he take his bonds for flowers,
As years go on, he feels them press upon him,
Begins to flutter in them, and at last
Breaks thro' them, and so flies away for ever;
While, had you left him free use of his wings,
Who knows that he had ever dream'd of flying?

EVA.

But all that sounds so wicked and so strange;
'Till death us part'—those are the only words,
The true ones—nay, and those not true enough,
For they that love do not believe that death
Will part them. Why do you jest with me, and try
To fright me? Tho' you are a gentleman,
I but a farmer's daughter——

EDGAR.

Tut! you talk
Old feudalism. When the great Democracy
Makes a new world——

EVA.

And if you be not jesting,
Neither the old world, nor the new, nor father,
Sister, nor you, shall ever see me more.

EDGAR (*moved*).

Then—(*aside*) Shall I say it?— (*aloud*) fly with me to-day.

EVA.

No! Philip, Philip, if you do not marry me,
I shall go mad for utter shame and die.

EDGAR.

Then, if we needs must be conventional,
When shall your parish-parson bawl our banns
Before your gaping clowns?

EVA.

Not in our church—
I think I scarce could hold my head up there.
Is there no other way?

EDGAR.

Yes, if you cared
To fee an over-opulent superstition,
Then they would grant you what they call a licence
To marry. Do you wish it?

EVA.

Do I wish it?

EDGAR.

In London.

EVA.

You will write to me?

EDGAR.

I will.

EVA.

And I will fly to you thro' the night, the storm—
Yes, tho' the fire should run along the ground,
As once it did in Egypt. Oh, you see,
I was just out of school, I had no mother—
My sister far away—and you, a gentleman,
Told me to trust you: yes, in everything—
That was the only *true* love; and I trusted—
Oh, yes, indeed, I would have died for you.
How could you—Oh, how could you?—nay, how could I?
But now you will set all right again, and I
Shall not be made the laughter of the village,
And poor old father not die miserable.

DORA (*singing in the distance*).

'O joy for the promise of May, of May,
O joy for the promise of May.'

EDGAR.

Speak not so loudly; that must be your sister.
You never told her, then, of what has past
Between us.

EVA.

Never!

EDGAR.

Do not till I bid you.

EVA.

No, Philip, no. [*Turns away.*

EDGAR (*moved*).

How gracefully there she stands
Weeping—the little Niobe! What! we prize
The statue or the picture all the more
When we have made them ours! Is she less loveable,
Less lovely, being wholly mine? To stay—
Follow my art among these quiet fields,
Live with these honest folk——
And play the fool!
No! she that gave herself to me so easily
Will yield herself as easily to another.

EVA.

Did you speak, Philip?

EDGAR.

Nothing more, farewell.
[*They embrace.*

DORA (*coming nearer*).

'O grief for the promise of May, of May,
O grief for the promise of May.'

EDGAR (*still embracing her*).

Keep up your heart until we meet again.

EVA.

If that should break before we meet again?

EDGAR.

Break! nay, but call for Philip when you will,
And he returns.

EVA.

Heaven hears you, Philip Edgar!

EDGAR (*moved*).

And *he* would hear you even from the grave.
Heaven curse him if he come not at your call!

[*Exit.*

Enter DORA.

DORA.

Well, Eva!

EVA.

Oh, Dora, Dora, how long you have been away from home! Oh, how often I have wished for you! It seemed to me that we were parted for ever.

DORA.

For ever, you foolish child! What's come over you? We parted like the brook yonder about the alder island, to come together again in a moment and to go on together again, till one of us be married. But where is this Mr. Edgar whom you praised so in your first letters? You haven't even mentioned him in your last?

EVA.

He has gone to London.

DORA.

Ay, child; and you look thin and pale. Is it for his absence? Have you fancied yourself in love with him? That's all nonsense, you know, such a baby as you are. But you shall tell me all about it.

EVA.

Not now—presently. Yes, I have been in trouble, but I am happy—I think, quite happy now.

DORA (*taking* EVA'S *hand*).

Come, then, and make them happy in the long barn, for father is in his glory, and there is a piece

of beef like a house-side, and a plum-pudding as big as the round haystack. But see they are coming out for the dance already. Well, my child, let us join them.

Enter all from barn laughing. EVA *sits reluctantly under apple tree.* STEER *enters smoking, sits by* EVA.

Dance.

ACT II.

Five years have elapsed between Acts I. and II.

SCENE.—*A meadow. On one side a pathway going over a rustic bridge. At back the farmhouse among trees. In the distance a church spire.*

DOBSON *and* DORA.

DOBSON.

So the owd uncle i' Coomberland be deäd, Miss Dora, beänt he?

DORA.

Yes, Mr. Dobson, I've been attending on his death-bed and his burial.

DOBSON.

It be five year sin' ye went afoor to him, and it seems to me nobbut t'other day. Hesn't he left ye nowt?

DORA.

No, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON.

But he were mighty fond o' ye, warn't he?

DORA.

Fonder of poor Eva—like everybody else.

DOBSON (*handing* DORA *basket of roses*).

Not like me, Miss Dora; and I ha' browt these roses to ye—I forgits what they calls 'em, but I hallus gi'ed soom on 'em to Miss Eva at this time o' year. Will ya taäke 'em? fur Miss Eva, she set the bush by my dairy winder afoor she went to school at Little-chester—so I allus browt soom on 'em to her; and now she be gone, will ye taäke 'em, Miss Dora?

DORA.

I thank you. They tell me that yesterday you mentioned her name too suddenly before my father. See that you do not do so again!

DOBSON.

Noä; I knaws a deäl better now. I seed how the owd man wur vext.

DORA.

I take them, then, for Eva's sake.

[*Takes basket, places some in her dress.*

DOBSON.

Eva's saäke. Yeas. Poor gel, poor gel! I can't abeär to think on 'er now, fur I'd ha' done owt fur 'er mysen; an' ony o' Steer's men, an' ony o' my men 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, an' all the parish 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, fur we was all on us proud on 'er, an' them theer be soom of her oän roses, an' she wur as sweet as ony on 'em—the Lord bless 'er—'er oän sen; an' weänt ye taäke 'em now, Miss Dora, fur 'er saäke an' fur my saäke an' all?

DORA.

Do you want them back again?

DOBSON.

Noä, noä! Keep 'em. But I hed a word to saäy to ye.

DORA.

Why, Farmer, you should be in the hayfield looking after your men; you couldn't have more splendid weather.

DOBSON.

I be a going theer; but I thowt I'd bring tha them roses fust. The weather's well anew, but the glass be a bit shaäky. S'iver we've led moäst on it.

DORA.

Ay! but you must not be too sudden with it either as you were last year, when you put it in green, and your stack caught fire.

DOBSON.

I were insured, Miss, an' I lost nowt by it. But I weänt be too sudden wi' it; and I feel sewer, Miss Dora, that I ha' been noän too sudden wi' you, fur I ha' sarved for ye well nigh as long as the man sarved for 'is sweet'art i' Scriptur'. Weänt ye gi'e me a kind answer at last?

DORA.

I have no thought of marriage, my friend. We have been in such grief these five years, not only on my sister's account, but the ill success of the farm, and the debts, and my father's breaking down, and his blindness. How could I think of leaving him?

DOBSON.

Eh, but I be well to do; and if ye would nobbut hev me, I would taäke the owd blind man to my oän fireside. You should hev him allus wi' ye.

DORA.

You are generous, but it cannot be. I cannot love you; nay, I think I never can be brought to love any man. It seems to me that I hate men, ever since my sister left us. Oh, see here. (*Pulls out a letter.*) I wear it next my heart. Poor sister, I had it five years ago. 'Dearest Dora,— I have lost myself, and am lost for ever to you and my poor father. I thought Mr. Edgar the best of men, and he has proved himself the worst. Seek not for me, or you may find me at the bottom of the river.—EVA.'

DOBSON.

Be that my fault?

DORA.

No; but how should I, with this grief still at my heart, take to the milking of your cows, the fatting of your calves, the making of your butter, and the managing of your poultry?

DOBSON.

Naäy, but I hev an owd woman as 'ud see to all that; and you should sit i' your oän parlour quite like a laädy, ye should!

DORA.

It cannot be.

DOBSON.

And plaäy the pianner, if ye liked, all daäy long, like a laädy, ye should an' all.

DORA.

It cannot be.

DOBSON.

And I would loove tha moor nor ony gentleman 'ud loove tha.

DORA.

No, no; it cannot be.

DOBSON.

And p'raps ye hears 'at I soomtimes taäkes a drop too much; but that be all along o' you, Miss, because ye weänt hev me; but, if ye would, I could put all that o' one side eäsy anew.

DORA.

Cannot you understand plain words, Mr. Dobson? I tell you, it cannot be.

DOBSON.

Eh, lass! Thy feyther eddicated his darters to marry gentlefoälk, and see what's coomed on it.

DORA.

That is enough, Farmer Dobson. You have shown me that, though fortune had born *you* into the estate of a gentleman, you would still have been Farmer Dobson. You had better attend to your hayfield. Good afternoon. [*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Farmer Dobson!' Well, I be Farmer Dobson; but I thinks Farmer Dobson's dog 'ud ha' knaw'd better nor to cast her sister's misfortin inter 'er teeth arter she'd been a-reädin' me the letter wi' 'er voice a-shaäkin', and the drop in 'er eye. Theer she goäs! Shall I foller 'er and ax 'er to maäke it up? Noä, not yet. Let 'er cool upon it; I likes 'er all the better fur taäkin' me down, like a laädy, as she be. Farmer Dobson! I be Farmer Dobson, sewer anew;

but if iver I cooms upo' Gentleman Hedgar ageän, and doänt laäy my cartwhip athurt 'is shou'ders, why then I beänt Farmer Dobson, but summun else—blaäme't if I beänt!

Enter HAYMAKERS *with a load of hay.*

The last on it, eh?

1ST HAYMAKER.

Yeas.

DOBSON.

Hoäm wi' it, then. [*Exit surlily.*

1ST HAYMAKER.

Well, it be the last loäd hoäm.

2ND HAYMAKER.

Yeas, an' owd Dobson should be glad on it. What maäkes 'im allus sa glum?

SALLY ALLEN.

Glum! he be wuss nor glum. He coom'd up to me yisterdaäy i' the haäyfield, when meä and my sweet'art was a workin' along o' one side wi' one another, and he sent 'im awaäy to t'other end o' the field; and when I axed 'im why, he telled me 'at

sweet'arts niver worked well togither; and I telled *'im* 'at sweet'arts allus worked best togither; and then he called me a rude naäme, and I can't abide 'im.

JAMES.

Why, lass, doänt tha knaw he be sweet upo' Dora Steer, and she weänt sa much as look at 'im? And wheniver 'e sees two sweet'arts togither like thou and me, Sally, he be fit to bust hissen wi' spites and jalousies.

SALLY.

Let 'im bust hissen, then, for owt *I* cares.

1ST HAYMAKER.

Well but, as I said afoor, it be the last loäd hoäm; do thou and thy sweet'art sing us hoäm to supper—'The Last Loäd Hoäm.'

ALL.

Ay! 'The Last Loäd Hoäm.'

Song.

What did ye do, and what did ye saäy,
Wi' the wild white rose, an' the woodbine sa gaäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue—

What did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
When ye thowt there were nawbody watchin' o' you,
And you an' your Sally was forkin' the haäy,
At the end of the daäy,
For the last loäd hoäm?

What did we do, and what did we saäy,
Wi' the briar sa green, an' the willer sa graäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue—
Do ye think I be gawin' to tell it to you,
What we mowt saäy, and what we mowt do,
When me an' my Sally was forkin' the haäy,
At the end of the daäy,
For the last loäd hoäm?

But what did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
Wi' the butterflies out, and the swallers at plaäy,
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue?
Why, coom then, owd feller, I'll tell it to you;
For me an' my Sally we sweär'd to be true,
To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
Till the end of the daäy
And the last loäd hoäm.

ALL.

Well sung!

JAMES.

Fanny be the naäme i' the song, but I swopt it fur *she.* [*Pointing to* SALLY.

SALLY.

Let ma aloän afoor foälk, wilt tha?

1ST HAYMAKER.

Ye shall sing that ageän to-night, fur owd Dobson 'll gi'e us a bit o' supper.

SALLY.

I weänt goä to owd Dobson; he wur rude to me i' tha haäyfield, and he'll be rude to me ageän to-night. Owd Steer's gotten all his grass down and wants a hand, and I'll goä to him.

1ST HAYMAKER.

Owd Steer gi'es nubbut cowd tea to *'is* men, and owd Dobson gi'es beer.

SALLY.

But I'd like owd Steer's cowd tea better nor Dobson's beer. Good-bye. [*Going.*

JAMES.

Gi'e us a buss fust, lass.

SALLY.

I tell'd tha to let ma aloän!

JAMES.

Why, wasn't thou and me a-bussin' o' one another t'other side o' the haäycock, when owd Dobson coom'd upo' us? I can't let tha aloän if I would, Sally. [*Offering to kiss her.*

SALLY.

Git along wi' ye, do! [*Exit.*

[*All laugh; exeunt singing.*

'To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
Till the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm.'

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD.

Not Harold! 'Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar!'
Her phantom call'd me by the name she loved.
I told her I should hear her from the grave.
Ay! yonder is her casement. I remember

Her bright face beaming starlike down upon me
Thro' that rich cloud of blossom. Since I left her
Here weeping, I have ranged the world, and sat
Thro' every sensual course of that full feast
That leaves but emptiness.

Song.

'To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,
To the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm.'

HAROLD.

Poor Eva! O my God, if man be only
A willy-nilly current of sensations—
Reaction needs must follow revel—yet—
Why feel remorse, he, knowing that he *must* have
Moved in the iron grooves of Destiny?
Remorse then is a part of Destiny,
Nature a liar, making us feel guilty
Of her own faults.
My grandfather—of him
They say, that women—
O this mortal house,
Which we are born into, is haunted by
The ghosts of the dead passions of dead men;
And these take flesh again with our own flesh,
And bring us to confusion.

He was only
A poor philosopher who call'd the mind
Of children a blank page, a *tabula rasa.*
There, there, is written in invisible inks
'Lust, Prodigality, Covetousness, Craft,
Cowardice, Murder'—and the heat and fire
Of life will bring them out, and black enough,
So the child grow to manhood: better death
With our first wail than life—

Song (further off).

'Till the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm,
Loäd hoäm.'

This bridge again! (*Steps on the bridge.*)
How often have I stood
With Eva here! The brook among its flowers!
Forget-me-not, meadowsweet, willow-herb.
I had some smattering of science then,
Taught her the learned names, anatomized
The flowers for her—and now I only wish
This pool were deep enough, that I might plunge
And lose myself for ever.

Enter DAN SMITH (*singing*).

Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä

Thruf slush an' squad
When roäds was bad,
But hallus ud stop at the Vine-an'-the-Hop,
Fur boäth on 'em knawed as well as mysen
That beer be as good fur 'erses as men.
Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä.

The beer's gotten oop into my 'eäd. S'iver I mun git along back to the farm, fur she tell'd ma to taäke the cart to Littlechester.

Enter DORA.

Half an hour late! why are you loitering here? Away with you at once. [*Exit* DAN SMITH.

(*Seeing* HAROLD *on bridge.*)

Some madman, is it,
Gesticulating there upon the bridge?
I am half afraid to pass.

HAROLD.

Sometimes I wonder,
When man has surely learnt at last that all
His old-world faith, the blossom of his youth,
Has faded, falling fruitless—whether then
All of us, all at once, may not be seized

With some fierce passion, not so much for Death
As against Life! all, all, into the dark—
No more!—and science now could drug and balm us
Back into nescience with as little pain
As it is to fall asleep.
This beggarly life,
This poor, flat, hedged-in field—no distance—this
Hollow Pandora-box,
With all the pleasures flown, not even Hope
Left at the bottom!
Superstitious fool,
What brought me here? To see her grave? her ghost?
Her ghost is everyway about me here.

DORA (*coming forward*).

Allow me, sir, to pass you.

HAROLD.

Eva!

DORA.

Eva!

HAROLD.

What are you? Where do you come from?

DORA.

From the farm
Here, close at hand.

HAROLD.

Are you—you are—that Dora,
The sister. I have heard of you. The likeness
Is very striking.

DORA.

You knew Eva, then?

HAROLD.

Yes—I was thinking of her when—O yes,
Many years back, and never since have met
Her equal for pure innocence of nature,
And loveliness of feature.

DORA.

No, nor I.

HAROLD.

Except, indeed, I have found it once again
In your own self.

DORA.

You flatter me. Dear Eva
Was always thought the prettier.

HAROLD.

And *her* charm
Of voice is also yours; and I was brooding
Upon a great unhappiness when you spoke.

DORA.

Indeed, you seem'd in trouble, sir.

HAROLD.

And you
Seem my good angel who may help me from it.

DORA (*aside*).

How worn he looks, poor man! who is it, I wonder.
How can I help him? (*Aloud.*) Might I ask your name?

HAROLD.

Harold.

DORA.

I never heard her mention you.

HAROLD.

I met her first at a farm in Cumberland—
Her uncle's.

DORA.

She was there six years ago.

HAROLD.

And if she never mention'd me, perhaps
The painful circumstances which I heard—
I will not vex you by repeating them—
Only last week at Littlechester, drove me
From out her memory. She has disappear'd,
They told me, from the farm—and darker news.

DORA.

She has disappear'd, poor darling, from the world—
Left but one dreadful line to say, that we
Should find her in the river; and we dragg'd
The Littlechester river all in vain:
Have sorrow'd for her all these years in vain.
And my poor father, utterly broken down
By losing her—she was his favourite child—
Has let his farm, all his affairs, I fear,
But for the slender help that I can give,
Fall into ruin. Ah! that villain, Edgar,
If he should ever show his face among us,
Our men and boys would hoot him, stone him, hunt him
With pitchforks off the farm, for all of them
Loved her, and she was worthy of all love.

HAROLD.

They say, we should forgive our enemies.

DORA.

Ay, if the wretch were dead I might forgive him;
We know not whether he be dead or living.

HAROLD.

What Edgar?

DORA.

Philip Edgar of Toft Hall
In Somerset. Perhaps you know him?

HAROLD.

Slightly.
(*Aside.*) Ay, for how slightly have I known myself.

DORA.

This Edgar, then, is living?

HAROLD.

Living? well—
One Philip Edgar of Toft Hall in Somerset
Is lately dead.

DORA.

Dead!—is there more than one?

HAROLD.

Nay—now—not one, (*aside*) for I am Philip Harold.

DORA.

That one, is he then—dead!

HAROLD.

(*Aside.*) My father's death,
Let her believe it mine; this, for the moment,
Will leave me a free field.

DORA.

Dead! and this world
Is brighter for his absence as that other
Is darker for his presence.

HAROLD.

Is not this
To speak too pitilessly of the dead?

DORA.

My five-years' anger cannot die at once,
Not all at once with death and him. I trust
I shall forgive him—by-and-by—not now.
O sir, you seem to have a heart; if you

Had seen us that wild morning when we found
Her bed unslept in, storm and shower lashing
Her casement, her poor spaniel wailing for her,
That desolate letter, blotted with her tears,
Which told us we should never see her more—
Our old nurse crying as if for her own child,
My father stricken with his first paralysis,
And then with blindness—had you been one of us
And seen all this, then you would know it is not
So easy to forgive—even the dead.

HAROLD.

But sure am I that of your gentleness
You will forgive him. She, you mourn for, seem'd
A miracle of gentleness—would not blur
A moth's wing by the touching; would not crush
The fly that drew her blood; and, were she living,
Would not—if penitent—have denied him *her*
Forgiveness. And perhaps the man himself,
When hearing of that piteous death, has suffer'd
More than we know. But wherefore waste your heart
In looking on a chill and changeless Past?
Iron will fuse, and marble melt; the Past
Remains the Past. But you are young, and—pardon
me—
As lovely as your sister. Who can tell

What golden hours, with what full hands, may be
Waiting you in the distance? Might I call
Upon your father—I have seen the world—
And cheer his blindness with a traveller's tales?

DORA.

Call if you will, and when you will. I cannot
Well answer for my father; but if you
Can tell me anything of our sweet Eva
When in her brighter girlhood, I at least
Will bid you welcome, and will listen to you.
Now I must go.

HAROLD.

But give me first your hand:
I do not dare, like an old friend, to shake it.
I kiss it as a prelude to that privilege
When you shall know me better.

DORA.

(*Aside.*) How beautiful
His manners are, and how unlike the farmer's!
You are staying here?

HAROLD.

Yes, at the wayside inn
Close by that alder-island in your brook,
'The Angler's Home.'

DORA.

Are *you* one?

HAROLD.

No, but I
Take some delight in sketching, and the country
Has many charms, altho' the inhabitants
Seem semi-barbarous.

DORA.

I am glad it pleases you;
Yet I, born here, not only love the country,
But its inhabitants too; and you, I doubt not,
Would take to them as kindly, if you cared
To live some time among them.

HAROLD.

If I did,
Then one at least of its inhabitants
Might have more charm for me than all the country.

DORA.

That one, then, should be grateful for your preference.

HAROLD.

I cannot tell, tho' standing in her presence.
(*Aside.*) She colours!

DORA.

Sir!

HAROLD.

Be not afraid of me,
For these are no conventional flourishes.
I do most earnestly assure you that
Your likeness—— [*Shouts and cries without.*

DORA.

What was that? my poor blind father—

Enter FARMING MAN.

FARMING MAN.

Miss Dora, Dan Smith's cart hes runned ower a laädy i' the holler laäne, and they ha' ta'en the body up inter your chaumber, and they be all a-callin' for ye.

DORA.

The body!—Heavens! I come!

HAROLD.

But you are trembling.
Allow me to go with you to the farm. [*Exeunt.*

Enter DOBSON.

DOBSON.

What feller wur it as 'a' been a-talkin' fur haäfe an hour wi' my Dora? (*Looking after him.*) Seeäms I ommost knaws the back on 'im—drest like a gentleman, too. Damn all gentlemen, says I! I should ha' thowt they'd hed anew o' gentlefoälk, as I telled 'er to-daäy when she fell foul upo' me.

Minds ma o' summun. I could sweär to that; but that be all one, fur I haätes 'im afoor I knaws what 'e be. Theer! he turns round. Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset! Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset!—Noä—yeas—thaw the feller's gone and maäde such a litter of his faäce.

Eh lad, if it be thou, I'll Philip tha! a-plaäyin' the saäme gaäme wi' my Dora—I'll Soomerset tha.

I'd like to drag 'im thruff the herse-pond, and she to be a-lookin' at it. I'd like to leather 'im black and blue, and she to be a-laughin' at it. I'd like to fell 'im as deäd as a bullock! (*Clenching his fist.*)

But what 'ud she saäy to that? She telled me once not to meddle wi' 'im, and now she be fallen out wi' ma, and I can't coom at 'er.

It mun be *him*. Noä! Fur she'd niver 'a been talkin' haäfe an hour wi' the divil 'at killed her oän sister, or she beänt Dora Steer.

Yeas! Fur she niver knawed 'is faäce when 'e wur 'ere afoor; but I'll maäke 'er knaw! I'll maäke 'er knaw!

Enter HAROLD.

Naäy, but I mun git out on 'is waäy now, or I shall be the death on 'im. [*Exit.*

HAROLD.

How the clown glared at me! that Dobbins, is it,
With whom I used to jar? but can he trace me
Thro' five years' absence, and my change of name,
The tan of southern summers and the beard?
I may as well avoid him.
Ladylike!
Lilylike in her stateliness and sweetness!
How came she by it?—a daughter of the fields,
This Dora!
She gave her hand, unask'd, at the farm-gate;
I almost think she half-return'd the pressure
Of mine. What, I that held the orange blossom
Dark as the yew? but may not those, who march
Before their age, turn back at times, and make
Courtesy to custom? and now the stronger motive,
Misnamed free-will—the crowd would call it conscience—
Moves me—to what? I am dreaming; for the past
Look'd thro' the present, Eva's eyes thro' hers—

A spell upon me! Surely I loved Eva
More than I knew! or is it but the past
That brightens in retiring? Oh, last night,
Tired, pacing my new lands at Littlechester,
I dozed upon the bridge, and the black river
Flow'd thro' my dreams—if dreams they were. She rose
From the foul flood and pointed toward the farm,
And her cry rang to me across the years,
'I call you, Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar!
Come, you will set all right again, and father
Will not die miserable.' I could make his age
A comfort to him—so be more at peace
With mine own self. Some of my former friends
Would find my logic faulty; let them. Colour
Flows thro' my life again, and I have lighted
On a new pleasure. Anyhow we must
Move in the line of least resistance when
The stronger motive rules.
But she hates Edgar.
May not this Dobbins, or some other, spy
Edgar in Harold? Well then, I must make her
Love Harold first, and then she will forgive
Edgar for Harold's sake. She said herself
She would forgive him, by-and-by, not now—
For her own sake *then*, if not for mine—not now—
But by-and-by.

Enter DOBSON *behind.*

DOBSON.

By-and-by—eh, lad, dosta knaw this paäper? Ye dropt it upo' the roäd. 'Philip Edgar, Esq.' Ay, you be a pretty squire. I ha' fun' ye out, I hev. Eh, lad, dosta knaw what tha meäns wi' by-and-by? Fur if ye be goin' to sarve our Dora as ye sarved our Eva—then, by-and-by, if she weänt listen to me when I be a-tryin' to saäve 'er—if she weänt—look to thysen, for, by the Lord, I'd think na moor o' maäkin' an end o' tha nor a carrion craw—noä—thaw they hanged ma at 'Size fur it.

HAROLD.

Dobbins, I think!

DOBSON.

I beänt Dobbins.

HAROLD.

Nor am I Edgar, my good fellow.

DOBSON.

Tha lies! What hasta been saäyin' to *my* Dora?

HAROLD.

I have been telling her of the death of one Philip Edgar of Toft Hall, Somerset.

DOBSON.

Tha lies!

HAROLD (*pulling out a newspaper*).

Well, my man, it seems that you can read. Look there—under the deaths.

DOBSON.

'O' the 17th, Philip Edgar, o' Toft Hall, Soomerset.' How coom thou to be sa like 'im, then?

HAROLD.

Naturally enough; for I am closely related to the dead man's family.

DOBSON.

An' ow coom thou by the letter to 'im?

HAROLD.

Naturally again; for as I used to transact all his business for him, I had to look over his letters. Now then, see these (*takes out letters*). Half a score of them, all directed to me—Harold.

DOBSON.

'Arold! 'Arold! 'Arold, so they be.

HAROLD.

My name is Harold! Good day, Dobbins!

[*Exit.*

DOBSON.

'Arold! The feller's cleän daäzed, an' maäzed, an' maäted, an' muddled ma. Deäd! It mun be true, fur it wur i' print as black as owt. Naäy, but 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Why, that wur the very twang on 'im. Eh, lad, but whether thou be Hedgar, or Hedgar's business man, thou hesn't naw business 'ere wi' *my* Dora, as I knaws on, an' whether thou calls thysen Hedgar or Harold, if thou stick to she I'll stick to thee—stick to tha like a weasel to a rabbit, I will. Ay, and I'd like to shoot tha like a rabbit an' all. 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Dang tha!

ACT III.

SCENE.—*A room in* STEER'S *house. Door leading into bedroom at the back.*

DORA (*ringing a handbell*).

Milly!

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

The little 'ymn? Yeäs, Miss; but I wur so ta'en up wi' leädin' the owd man about all the blessed murnin' 'at I ha' nobbut larned mysen haäfe on it.

'O man, forgive thy mortal foe,
Nor ever strike him blow for blow;
For all the souls on earth that live
To be forgiven must forgive.
Forgive him seventy times and seven;
For all the blessed souls in Heaven
Are both forgivers and forgiven.'

But I'll git the book ageän, and larn mysen the rest, and saäy it to ye afoor dark; ye ringed fur that, Miss, didn't ye?

DORA.

No, Milly; but if the farming-men be come for their wages, to send them up to me.

MILLY.

Yeas, Miss. [*Exit.*

DORA (*sitting at desk counting money*).

Enough at any rate for the present. (*Enter* FARMING MEN.) Good afternoon, my friends. I am sorry Mr. Steer still continues too unwell to attend to you, but the schoolmaster looked to the paying you your wages when I was away, didn't he?

MEN.

Yeäs; and thanks to ye.

DORA.

Some of our workmen have left us, but he sent me an alphabetical list of those that remain, so, Allen, I may as well begin with you.

ALLEN (*with his hand to his ear*).

Halfabitical! Taäke one o' the young 'uns fust, Miss, fur I be a bit deaf, and I wur hallus scaäred by a big word; leästwaäys, I should be wi' a lawyer.

DORA.

I spoke of your names, Allen, as they are arranged here (*shows book*)—according to their first letters.

ALLEN.

Letters! Yeas, I sees now. Them be what they larns the childer' at school, but I were burn afoor schoolin-time.

DORA.

But, Allen, tho' you can't read, you could white-wash that cottage of yours where your grandson had the fever.

ALLEN.

I'll hev it done o' Monday.

DORA.

Else if the fever spread, the parish will have to thank you for it.

ALLEN.

Meä? why, it be the Lord's doin', noän o' mine; d'ye think *I'd* gi'e 'em the fever? But I thanks ye all the saäme, Miss. (*Takes money.*)

DORA (*calling out names*).

Higgins, Jackson, Luscombe, Nokes, Oldham, Skipworth! (*All take money.*) Did you find that you worked at all the worse upon the cold tea than you would have done upon the beer?

HIGGINS.

Noä, Miss; we worked naw wuss upo' the cowd tea; but we'd ha' worked better upo' the beer.

DORA.

Come, come, you worked well enough, and I am much obliged to all of you. There's for you, and you, and you. Count the money and see if it's all right.

MEN.

All right, Miss; and thank ye kindly.

[*Exeunt* LUSCOMBE, NOKES, OLDHAM, SKIPWORTH.

DORA.

Dan Smith, my father and I forgave you stealing our coals. [DAN SMITH *advances to* DORA.

DAN SMITH (*bellowing*).

Whoy, O lor, Miss! that wur sa long back, and the walls sa thin, and the winders brokken, and the

weather sa cowd, and my missus a-gittin' ower 'er lyin'-in.

DORA.

Didn't I say that we had forgiven you? But, Dan Smith, they tell me that you—and you have six children—spent all your last Saturday's wages at the alehouse; that you were stupid drunk all Sunday, and so ill in consequence all Monday, that you did not come into the hayfield. Why should I pay you your full wages?

DAN SMITH.

I be ready to taäke the pledge.

DORA.

And as ready to break it again. Besides it was you that were driving the cart—and I fear you were tipsy then, too—when you lamed the lady in the hollow lane.

DAN SMITH (*bellowing*).

O lor, Miss! noä, noä, noä! Ye sees the holler laäne be hallus sa dark i' the arternoon, and wheere the big eshtree cuts athurt it, it gi'es a turn like, and 'ow should I see to laäme the laädy, and me äcoomin' along pretty sharp an' all?

DORA.

Well, there are your wages; the next time you waste them at a pothouse you get no more from me. (*Exit* DAN SMITH.) Sally Allen, you worked for Mr. Dobson, didn't you?

SALLY (*advancing*).

Yeäs, Miss; but he wur so rough wi' ma, I couldn't abide 'im.

DORA.

Why should he be rough with you? You are as good as a man in the hayfield. What's become of your brother?

SALLY.

'Listed for a soädger, Miss, i' the Queen's Real Hard Tillery.

DORA.

And your sweetheart—when are you and he to be married?

SALLY.

At Michaelmas, Miss, please God.

DORA.

You are an honest pair. I will come to your wedding.

SALLY.

An' I thanks ye fur that, Miss, moor nor fur the waäge.

(*Going—returns.*)

'A cotched ma about the waäist, Miss, when 'e wur 'ere afoor, an' axed ma to be 'is little sweet-art, an soä I knaw'd 'im when I seed 'im ageän an I telled feyther on 'im.

DORA.

What is all this, Allen?

ALLEN.

Why, Miss Dora, meä and my maätes, us three, we wants to hev three words wi' ye.

HIGGINS.

That be 'im, and meä, Miss.

JACKSON.

An' meä, Miss.

ALLEN.

An' we weänt mention naw naämes, we'd as lief talk o' the Divil afoor ye as 'im, fur they says the master goäs cleän off his 'eäd when he 'eärs the naäme on 'im; but us three, arter Sally'd telled us on 'im, we fun' 'im out a-walkin' i' West Field wi' a white 'at, nine o'clock, upo' Tuesday murnin', and all on us, wi' your leave, we wants to leather 'im.

DORA.

Who?

ALLEN.

Him as did the mischief here, five year' sin'.

DORA.

Mr. Edgar?

ALLEN.

Theer, Miss! You ha' naämed 'im—not me.

DORA.

He's dead, man—dead; gone to his account—dead and buried.

ALLEN.

I beänt sa sewer o' that, fur Sally knaw'd 'im; Now then?

DORA.

Yes; it was in the Somersetshire papers.

ALLEN.

Then yon mun be his brother, an' we'll leather *'im*.

DORA.

I never heard that he had a brother. Some foolish mistake of Sally's; but what! would you beat a man for his brother's fault? That were a wild justice indeed. Let bygones be bygones. Go home! Good-night! (*All exeunt.*) I have once more paid them all. The work of the farm will go on still, but for how long? We are almost at the bottom of the well: little more to be drawn from it—and what then? Encumbered as we are, who would lend us anything? We shall have to sell all the land, which Father, for a whole life, has been getting together, again, and that, I am sure, would be the death of him. What am I to do? Farmer Dobson, were I to marry him, has promised to keep our heads above water; and the man has doubtless a good heart, and a true and lasting love for me: yet—though I can be sorry for him—as the good Sally says, 'I can't abide him'—almost brutal, and matched with my Harold is like a hedge thistle by a garden rose. But then,

he, too—will he ever be of one faith with his wife? which is my dream of a true marriage. Can I fancy him kneeling with me, and uttering the same prayer; standing up side by side with me, and singing the same hymn? I fear not. Have I done wisely, then, in accepting him? But may not a girl's love-dream have too much romance in it to be realised all at once, or altogether, or anywhere but in Heaven? And yet I had once a vision of a pure and perfect marriage, where the man and the woman, only differing as the stronger and the weaker, should walk hand in hand together down this valley of tears, as they call it so truly, to the grave at the bottom, and lie down there together in the darkness which would seem but for a moment, to be wakened again together by the light of the resurrection, and no more partings for ever and for ever. (*Walks up and down. She sings.*)

'O happy lark, that warblest high
Above thy lowly nest,
O brook, that brawlest merrily by
Thro' fields that once were blest,
O tower spiring to the sky,
O graves in daisies drest,
O Love and Life, how weary am I,
And how I long for rest.'

There, there, I am a fool! Tears! I have sometimes been moved to tears by a chapter of fine writing in a novel; but what have I to do with tears now? All depends on me—Father, this poor girl, the farm, everything; and they both love me—I am all in all to both; and he loves me too, I am quite sure of that. Courage, courage! and all will go well. (*Goes to bedroom door; opens it.*) How dark your room is! Let me bring you in here where there is still full daylight. (*Brings* EVA *forward.*) Why, you look better.

EVA.

And I feel so much better that I trust I may be able by-and-by to help you in the business of the farm; but I must not be known yet. Has anyone found me out, Dora?

DORA.

Oh, no; you kept your veil too close for that when they carried you in; since then, no one has seen you but myself.

EVA.

Yes—this Milly.

DORA.

Poor blind Father's little guide, Milly, who came to us three years after you were gone, how should she

know you? But now that you have been brought to us as it were from the grave, dearest Eva, and have been here so long, will you not speak with Father to-day?

EVA.

Do you think that I may? No, not yet. I am not equal to it yet.

DORA.

Why? Do you still suffer from your fall in the hollow lane?

EVA.

Bruised; but no bones broken.

DORA.

I have always told Father that the huge old ash-tree there would cause an accident some day; but he would never cut it down, because one of the Steers had planted it there in former times.

EVA.

If it had killed one of the Steers there the other day, it might have been better for her, for him, and for you.

DORA.

Come, come, keep a good heart! Better for me! That's good. How better for me?

EVA.

You tell me you have a lover. Will he not fly from you if he learn the story of my shame and that I am still living?

DORA.

No; I am sure that when we are married he will be willing that you and Father should live with us; for, indeed, he tells me that he met you once in the old times, and was much taken with you, my dear.

EVA.

Taken with me; who was he? Have you told him I am here?

DORA.

No; do you wish it?

EVA.

See, Dora; you yourself are ashamed of me (*weeps*), and I do not wonder at it.

DORA.

But I should wonder at myself if it were so. Have we not been all in all to one another from the time when we first peeped into the bird's nest, waded in the brook, ran after the butterflies, and prattled to each other that we would marry fine gentlemen, and played at being fine ladies?

EVA.

That last was my Father's fault, poor man. And this lover of yours—this Mr. Harold—is a gentleman?

DORA.

That he is, from head to foot. I do believe I lost my heart to him the very first time we met, and I love him so much——

EVA.

Poor Dora!

DORA.

That I dare not tell him how much I love him.

EVA.

Better not. Has he offered you marriage, this gentleman?

DORA.

Could I love him else?

EVA.

And are you quite sure that after marriage this gentleman will not be ashamed of his poor farmer's daughter among the ladies in his drawing-room?

DORA.

Shamed of me in a drawing-room! Wasn't Miss Vavasour, our schoolmistress at Littlechester, a lady born? Were not our fellow-pupils all ladies? Wasn't dear mother herself at least by one side a lady? Can't I speak like a lady; pen a letter like a lady; talk a little French like a lady; play a little like a lady? Can't a girl when she loves her husband, and he her, make herself anything he wishes her to be? Shamed of me in a drawing-room, indeed! See here! 'I hope your Lordship is quite recovered of your gout?' (*Curtsies.*) 'Will your Ladyship ride to cover to-day? (*Curtsies.*) I can recommend our Voltigeur.' 'I am sorry that we could not attend your Grace's party on the 10th!' (*Curtsies.*) There, I am glad my nonsense has made you smile!

EVA.

I have heard that 'your Lordship,' and 'your Ladyship,' and 'your Grace' are all growing old-fashioned!

DORA.

But the love of sister for sister can never be old-fashioned. I have been unwilling to trouble you with questions, but you seem somewhat better to-day. We found a letter in your bedroom torn into bits. I couldn't make it out. What was it?

EVA.

From him! from him! He said we had been most happy together, and he trusted that some time we should meet again, for he had not forgotten his promise to come when I called him. But that was a mockery, you know, for he gave me no address, and there was no word of marriage; and, O Dora, he signed himself 'Yours gratefully'—fancy, Dora, 'gratefully'! 'Yours gratefully'!

DORA.

Infamous wretch! (*Aside.*) Shall I tell her he is dead? No; she is still too feeble.

EVA.

Hark! Dora, some one is coming. I cannot and I will not see anybody.

DORA.

It is only Milly.

Enter MILLY, *with basket of roses.*

DORA.

Well, Milly, why do you come in so roughly? The sick lady here might have been asleep.

MILLY.

Pleäse, Miss, Mr. Dobson telled me to saäy he's browt some of Miss Eva's roses for the sick laädy to smell on.

DORA.

Take them, dear. Say that the sick lady thanks him! Is he here?

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss; and he wants to speak to ye partic'lar.

DORA.

Tell him I cannot leave the sick lady just yet.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss; but he says he wants to tell ye summut very partic'lar.

DORA.

Not to-day. What are you staying for?

MILLY.

Why, Miss, I be afeard I shall set him a-sweäring like onythink.

DORA.

And what harm will that do you, so that you do not copy his bad manners? Go, child. (*Exit* MILLY.) But, Eva, why did you write 'Seek me at the bottom of the river'?

EVA.

Why? because I meant it!—that dreadful night! that lonely walk to Littlechester, the rain beating in my face all the way, dead midnight when I came upon the bridge; the river, black, slimy, swirling

under me in the lamplight, by the rotten wharfs—but I was so mad, that I mounted upon the parapet——

DORA.

You make me shudder!

EVA.

To fling myself over, when I heard a voice, 'Girl, what are you doing there?' It was a Sister of Mercy, come from the death-bed of a pauper, who had died in his misery blessing God, and the Sister took me to her house, and bit by bit—for she promised secrecy —I told her all.

DORA.

And what then?

EVA.

She would have persuaded me to come back here, but I couldn't. Then she got me a place as nursery governess, and when the children grew too old for me, and I asked her once more to help me, once more she said, 'Go home'; but I hadn't the heart or face to do it. And then—what would Father say? I sank so low that I went into service—the drudge of a lodging-house—and when the mistress died, and I appealed to the Sister again, her answer—I think I have it about me—yes, there it is!

DORA (*reads*).

'My dear Child,—I can do no more for you. I have done wrong in keeping your secret; your Father must be now in extreme old age. Go back to him and ask his forgiveness before he dies.—SISTER AGATHA.' Sister Agatha is right. Don't you long for Father's forgiveness?

EVA.

I would almost die to have it!

DORA.

And he may die before he gives it; may drop off any day, any hour. You must see him at once. (*Rings bell. Enter* MILLY.) Milly, my dear, how did you leave Mr. Steer?

MILLY.

He's been a-moänin' and a-groänin' in 'is sleep, but I thinks he be wakkenin' oop.

DORA.

Tell him that I and the lady here wish to see him. You see she is lamed, and cannot go down to him.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss, I will. [*Exit* MILLY.

DORA.

I ought to prepare you. You must not expect to find our Father as he was five years ago. He is much altered; but I trust that your return—for you know, my dear, you were always his favourite—will give him, as they say, a new lease of life.

EVA (*clinging to* DORA).

Oh, Dòra, Dora!

Enter STEER, *led by* MILLY.

STEER.

Hes the cow cawved?

DORA.

No, Father.

STEER.

Be the colt deäd?

DORA.

No, Father.

STEER.

He wur sa bellows'd out wi' the wind this murnin', 'at I tell'd 'em to gallop 'im. Be he deäd?

DORA.

Not that I know.

STEER.

What hasta sent fur me, then, fur?

DORA (*taking* STEER'S *arm*).

Well, Father, I have a surprise for you.

STEER.

I ha niver been surprised but once i' my life, and I went blind upon it.

DORA.

Eva has come home.

STEER.

Hoäm? fro' the bottom o' the river?

DORA.

No, Father, that was a mistake. She's here again.

STEER.

The Steers was all gentlefoälks i' the owd times, an' I worked early an' laäte to maäke 'em all gentlefoälks ageän. The land belonged to the Steers i' the owd times, an' it belongs to the Steers ageän: I bowt it back ageän; but I couldn't buy my darter back ageän when she lost hersen, could I? I eddicated boäth on 'em to marry gentlemen, an' one on 'em went an' lost hersen i' the river.

DORA.

No, Father, she's here.

STEER.

Here! she moänt coom here. What would her mother saäy? If it be her ghoäst, we mun abide it. We can't keep a ghoäst out.

EVA (*falling at his feet*).

O forgive me! forgive me!

STEER.

Who said that? Taäke me awaäy, little gell. It be one o' my bad daäys. [*Exit* STEER *led by* MILLY.

DORA (*smoothing* EVA'S *forehead*).

Be not so cast down, my sweet Eva. You heard him say it was one of his bad days. He will be sure to know you to-morrow.

EVA.

It is almost the last of my bad days, I think. I am very faint. I must lie down. Give me your arm. Lead me back again.

[DORA *takes* EVA *into inner room.*

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

Miss Dora! Miss Dora!

DORA (*returning and leaving the bedroom door ajar*).

Quiet! quiet! What is it?

MILLY.

Mr. 'Arold, Miss.

DORA.

Below?

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss. He be saäyin' a word to the owd man, but he'll coom up if ye lets 'im.

DORA.

Tell him, then, that I'm waiting for him.

MILLY.

Yeäs, Miss.

[*Exit.* DORA *sits pensively and waits.*

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD.

You are pale, my Dora! but the ruddiest cheek
That ever charm'd the plowman of your wolds
Might wish its rose a lily, could it look
But half as lovely. I was speaking with
Your father, asking his consent—you wish'd me—
That we should marry: he would answer nothing,
I could make nothing of him; but, my flower,
You look so weary and so worn! What is it
Has put you out of heart?

DORA.

It puts me in heart
Again to see you; but indeed the state

Of my poor father puts me out of heart.
Is yours yet living?

HAROLD.

No—I told you.

DORA.

When?

HAROLD.

Confusion!—Ah well, well! the state we all
Must come to in our spring-and-winter world
If we live long enough! and poor Steer looks
The very type of Age in a picture, bow'd
To the earth he came from, to the grave he goes to,
Beneath the burthen of years.

DORA.

More like the picture
Of Christian in my 'Pilgrim's Progress' here,
Bow'd to the dust beneath the burthen of sin.

HAROLD.

Sin! What sin?

DORA.

Not his own.

HAROLD.

That nursery-tale
Still read, then?

DORA.

Yes; our carters and our shepherds
Still find a comfort there.

HAROLD.

Carters and shepherds!

DORA.

Scorn! I hate scorn. A soul with no religion—
My mother used to say that such a one
Was without rudder, anchor, compass—might be
Blown everyway with every gust and wreck
On any rock; and tho' you are good and gentle,
Yet if thro' any want——

HAROLD.

Of this religion?
Child, read a little history, you will find
The common brotherhood of man has been
Wrong'd by the cruelties of his religions
More than could ever have happen'd thro' the want
Of any or all of them.

DORA.

—But, O dear friend,
If thro' the want of any—I mean the true one—
And pardon me for saying it—you should ever
Be tempted into doing what might seem
Not altogether worthy of you, I think
That I should break my heart, for you have taught me
To love you.

HAROLD.

What is this? some one been stirring
Against me? he, your rustic amourist,
The polish'd Damon of your pastoral here,
This Dobson of your idyll?

DORA.

No, Sir, no!
Did you not tell me he was crazed with jealousy,
Had threaten'd ev'n your life, and would say anything?
Did *I* not promise not to listen to him,
Nor ev'n to see the man?

HAROLD.

Good; then what is it
That makes you talk so dolefully?

DORA.

I told you—
My father. Well, indeed, a friend just now,
One that has been much wrong'd, whose griefs are mine,
Was warning me that if a gentleman
Should wed a farmer's daughter, he would be
Sooner or later shamed of her among
The ladies, born his equals.

HAROLD.

More fool he!
What I that have been call'd a Socialist,
A Communist, a Nihilist—what you will!——

DORA.

What are all these?

HAROLD.

Utopian idiotcies.
They did not last three Junes. Such rampant weeds
Strangle each other, die, and make the soil
For Cæsars, Cromwells, and Napoleons
To root their power in. I have freed myself
From all such dreams, and some will say because
I have inherited my Uncle. Let them.

But—shamed of you, my Empress! I should prize
The pearl of Beauty, even if I found it
Dark with the soot of slums.

DORA.

But I can tell you,
We Steers are of old blood, tho' we be fallen.
See there our shield. (*Pointing to arms on mantelpiece.*) For I have heard the Steers
Had land in Saxon times; and your own name
Of Harold sounds so English and so old
I am sure you must be proud of it.

HAROLD.

Not I!
As yet I scarcely feel it mine. I took it
For some three thousand acres. I have land now
And wealth, and lay both at your feet.

DORA.

And *what* was
Your name before?

HAROLD.

Come, come, my girl, enough
Of this strange talk. I love you and you me.
True, I have held opinions, hold some still,

Which you would scarce approve of: for all that,
I am a man not prone to jealousies,
Caprices, humours, moods; but very ready
To make allowances, and mighty slow
To feel offences. Nay, I do believe
I could forgive—well, almost anything—
And that more freely than your formal priest,
Because I know more fully than *he* can
What poor earthworms are all and each of us,
Here crawling in this boundless Nature. Dora,
If marriage ever brought a woman happiness
I doubt not I can make you happy.

DORA.

You make me
Happy already.

HAROLD.

And I never said
As much before to any woman living.

DORA.

No?

HAROLD.

No! by this true kiss, *you* are the first
I ever have loved truly. [*They kiss each other.*

EVA (*with a wild cry*).

Philip Edgar!

HAROLD.

The phantom cry! *You*—did *you* hear a cry?

DORA.

She must be crying out 'Edgar' in her sleep.

HAROLD.

Who must be crying out 'Edgar' in her sleep?

DORA.

Your pardon for a minute. She must be waked.

HAROLD.

Who must be waked?

DORA.

I am not deaf: you fright me.

What ails you?

HAROLD.

Speak.

DORA.

You know her, Eva.

HAROLD.

Eva!

[EVA *opens the door and stands in the entry.*

She!

EVA.

Make her happy, then, and I forgive you.

[*Falls dead.*

DORA.

Happy! What? Edgar? Is it so? Can it be?
They told me so. Yes, yes! I see it all now.
O she has fainted. Sister, Eva, sister!
He is yours again—he will love *you* again;
I give him back to you again. Look up!
One word, or do but smile! Sweet, do you hear me?

[*Puts her hand on* EVA'S *heart.*

There, there—the heart, O God!—the poor young heart
Broken at last—all still—and nothing left
To live for. [*Falls on body of her sister.*

HAROLD.

Living . . . dead . . . She said 'all still.
Nothing to live for.'
She—she knows me—now
(*A pause.*)

She knew me from the first, she juggled with me,
She hid this sister, told me she was dead—
I have wasted pity on her—not dead now—
No! acting, playing on me, both of them.
They drag the river for her! no, not they!
Playing on me—not dead now—a swoon—a scene—
Yet—how she made her wail as for the dead!

Enter MILLY.

MILLY.

Pleäse, Mister 'Arold.

HAROLD (*roughly*).

Well?

MILLY.

The owd man's coom'd ageän to 'issen, an' wants
To hev a word wi' ye about the marriage.

HAROLD.

The what?

MILLY.

The marriage.

HAROLD.

The marriage?

MILLY.

Yeäs, the marriage.
Granny says marriages be maäde i' 'eaven.

HAROLD.

She lies! They are made in Hell. Child, can't you see?
Tell them to fly for a doctor.

MILLY.

O law—yeäs, Sir!
I'll run fur 'im mysen. [*Exit.*

HAROLD.

All silent there,
Yes, deathlike! Dead? I dare not look: if dead,
Were it best to steal away, to spare myself,
And her too, pain, pain, pain?
My curse on all
This world of mud, on all its idiot gleams
Of pleasure, all the foul fatalities
That blast our natural passions into pains!

Enter DOBSON.

DOBSON.

You, Master Hedgar, Harold, or whativer
They calls ye, for I warrants that ye goäs

By haäfe a scoor o' naämes—out o' the chaumber.

[*Dragging him past the body.*

HAROLD.

Not that way, man! Curse on your brutal strength!
I cannot pass that way.

DOBSON.

Out o' the chaumber!
I'll mash tha into nowt.

HAROLD.

The mere wild-beast!

DOBSON.

Out o' the chaumber, dang tha!

HAROLD.

Lout, churl, clown!

[*While they are shouting and struggling* DORA *rises and comes between them.*

DORA (*to* DOBSON).

Peace, let him be: it is the chamber of Death!
Sir, you are tenfold more a gentleman,
A hundred times more worth a woman's love,
Than this, this—but I waste no words upon him:
His wickedness is like my wretchedness—
Beyond all language.

(*To* HAROLD.)

You—you see her there!
Only fifteen when first you came on her,
And then the sweetest flower of all the wolds,
So lovely in the promise of her May,
So winsome in her grace and gaiety,
So loved by all the village people here,
So happy in herself and in her home——

DOBSON (*agitated*).

Theer, theer! ha' done. I can't abeär to see her.
[*Exit.*

DORA.

A child, and all as trustful as a child!
Five years of shame and suffering broke the heart
That only beat for you; and he, the father,
Thro' that dishonour which you brought upon us,
Has lost his health, his eyesight, even his mind.

HAROLD (*covering his face*).

Enough!

DORA.

It seem'd so; only there was left
A second daughter, and to her you came
Veiling one sin to act another.

HAROLD.

No!
You wrong me there! hear, hear me! I wish'd, if
you—— [*Pauses.*

DORA.

If I——

HAROLD.

Could love me, could be brought to love me
As I loved you——

DORA.

What then?

HAROLD.

I wish'd, I hoped
To make, to make——

DORA.

What did you hope to make?

HAROLD.

'Twere best to make an end of my lost life.
O Dora, Dora!

DORA.

What did you hope to make?

HAROLD.

Make, make!
I cannot find the word—forgive it—
Amends.

DORA.

For what? to whom?

HAROLD.

To him, to you!
[*Falling at her feet.*

DORA.

To *him!* to *me!*
No, not with all your wealth,
Your land, your life! Out in the fiercest storm
That ever made earth tremble—he, nor I—
The shelter of *your* roof—not for one moment—
Nothing from *you!*
Sunk in the deepest pit of pauperism,
Push'd from all doors as if we bore the plague,
Smitten with fever in the open field,
Laid famine-stricken at the gates of Death—
Nothing from you!
But she there—her last word
Forgave—and I forgive you. If you ever
Forgive yourself, you are even lower and baser
Than even I can well believe you. Go!

[*He lies at her feet. Curtain falls.*

DEMETER AND OTHER POEMS.

TO THE MARQUIS OF DUFFERIN AND AVA.

I.

At times our Britain cannot rest,
  At times her steps are swift and rash;
  She moving, at her girdle clash
The golden keys of East and West.

II.

Not swift or rash, when late she lent
  The sceptres of her West, her East,
  To one, that ruling has increased
Her greatness and her self-content.

III.

Your rule has made the people love
  Their ruler. Your viceregal days
  Have added fulness to the phrase
Of 'Gauntlet in the velvet glove.'

IV.

But since your name will grow with Time,
Not all, as honouring your fair fame
Of Statesman, have I made the name
A golden portal to my rhyme:

V.

But more, that you and yours may know
From me and mine, how dear a debt
We owed you, and are owing yet
To you and yours, and still would owe.

VI.

For he—your India was his Fate,
And drew him over sea to you—
He fain had ranged her thro' and thro',
To serve her myriads and the State,—

VII.

A soul that, watch'd from earliest youth,
And on thro' many a brightening year,
Had never swerved for craft or fear,
By one side-path, from simple truth;

VIII.

Who might have chased and claspt Renown
And caught her chaplet here—and there
In haunts of jungle-poison'd air
The flame of life went wavering down;

IX.

But ere he left your fatal shore,
And lay on that funereal boat,
Dying, 'Unspeakable' he wrote
'Their kindness,' and he wrote no more;

X.

And sacred is the latest word;
And now the Was, the Might-have-been,
And those lone rites I have not seen,
And one drear sound I have not heard,

XI.

Are dreams that scarce will let me be,
Not there to bid my boy farewell,
When That within the coffin fell,
Fell—and flash'd into the Red Sea,

XII.

Beneath a hard Arabian moon
And alien stars. To question, why
The sons before the fathers die,
Not mine! and I may meet him soon;

XIII.

But while my life's late eve endures,
Nor settles into hueless gray,
My memories of his briefer day
Will mix with love for you and yours.

ON THE JUBILEE OF QUEEN VICTORIA.

I.

Fifty times the rose has flower'd and faded,
Fifty times the golden harvest fallen,
Since our Queen assumed the globe, the sceptre.

II.

She beloved for a kindliness
Rare in Fable or History,
Queen, and Empress of India,
Crown'd so long with a diadem
Never worn by a worthier,
Now with prosperous auguries
Comes at last to the bounteous
Crowning year of her Jubilee.

III.

Nothing of the lawless, of the Despot,
Nothing of the vulgar, or vainglorious,
All is gracious, gentle, great and Queenly.

IV.

You then joyfully, all of you,
Set the mountain aflame to-night,
Shoot your stars to the firmament,
Deck your houses, illuminate
All your towns for a festival,
And in each let a multitude
Loyal, each, to the heart of it,
One full voice of allegiance,
Hail the fair Ceremonial
Of this year of her Jubilee.

V.

Queen, as true to womanhood as Queenhood,
Glorying in the glories of her people,
Sorrowing with the sorrows of the lowest!

VI.

You, that wanton in affluence,
Spare not now to be bountiful,
Call your poor to regale with you,
All the lowly, the destitute,
Make their neighbourhood healthfuller,
Give your gold to the Hospital,
Let the weary be comforted,

Let the needy be banqueted,
Let the maim'd in his heart rejoice
At this glad Ceremonial,
And this year of her Jubilee.

VII.

Henry's fifty years are all in shadow,
Gray with distance Edward's fifty summers,
Ev'n her Grandsire's fifty half forgotten.

VIII.

You, the Patriot Architect,
You that shape for Eternity,
Raise a stately memorial,
Make it regally gorgeous,
Some Imperial Institute,
Rich in symbol, in ornament,
Which may speak to the centuries,
All the centuries after us,
Of this great Ceremonial,
And this year of her Jubilee.

IX.

Fifty years of ever-broadening Commerce!
Fifty years of ever-brightening Science!
Fifty years of ever-widening Empire!

X.

You, the Mighty, the Fortunate,
You, the Lord-territorial,
You, the Lord-manufacturer,
You, the hardy, laborious,
Patient children of Albion,
You, Canadian, Indian,
Australasian, African,
All your hearts be in harmony,
All your voices in unison,
Singing 'Hail to the glorious
Golden year of her Jubilee!'

XI.

Are there thunders moaning in the distance?
Are there spectres moving in the darkness?
Trust the Hand of Light will lead her people,
Till the thunders pass, the spectres vanish,
And the Light is Victor, and the darkness
Dawns into the Jubilee of the Ages.

TO PROFESSOR JEBB.

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM.

FAIR things are slow to fade away,
Bear witness you, that yesterday[1]
From out the Ghost of Pindar in you
Roll'd an Olympian; and they say[2]

That here the torpid mummy wheat
Of Egypt bore a grain as sweet
As that which gilds the glebe of England,
Sunn'd with a summer of milder heat.

So may this legend for awhile,
If greeted by your classic smile,
Tho' dead in its Trinacrian Enna,
Blossom again on a colder isle.

[1] In Bologna. [2] They say, for the fact is doubtful.

DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE.

(In Enna.)

Faint as a climate-changing bird that flies
All night across the darkness, and at dawn
Falls on the threshold of her native land,
And can no more, thou camest, O my child,
Led upward by the God of ghosts and dreams,
Who laid thee at Eleusis, dazed and dumb
With passing thro' at once from state to state,
Until I brought thee hither, that the day,
When here thy hands let fall the gather'd flower,
Might break thro' clouded memories once again
On thy lost self. A sudden nightingale
Saw thee, and flash'd into a frolic of song
And welcome; and a gleam as of the moon,
When first she peers along the tremulous deep,
Fled wavering o'er thy face, and chased away
That shadow of a likeness to the king
Of shadows, thy dark mate. Persephone!
Queen of the dead no more—my child! Thine
eyes

Again were human-godlike, and the Sun
Burst from a swimming fleece of winter gray,
And robed thee in his day from head to feet—
'Mother!' and I was folded in thine arms.

Child, those imperial, disimpassion'd eyes
Awed even me at first, thy mother—eyes
That oft had seen the serpent-wanded power
Draw downward into Hades with his drift
Of flickering spectres, lighted from below
By the red race of fiery Phlegethon;
But when before have Gods or men beheld
The Life that had descended re-arise,
And lighted from above him by the Sun?
So mighty was the mother's childless cry,
A cry that rang thro' Hades, Earth, and Heaven!

So in this pleasant vale we stand again,
The field of Enna, now once more ablaze
With flowers that brighten as thy footstep falls,
All flowers—but for one black blur of earth
Left by that closing chasm, thro' which the car
Of dark Aïdoneus rising rapt thee hence.
And here, my child, tho' folded in thine arms,
I feel the deathless heart of motherhood
Within me shudder, lest the naked glebe
Should yawn once more into the gulf, and thence

The shrilly whinnyings of the team of Hell,
Ascending, pierce the glad and songful air,
And all at once their arch'd necks, midnight-maned,
Jet upward thro' the mid-day blossom. No!
For, see, thy foot has touch'd it; all the space
Of blank earth-baldness clothes itself afresh,
And breaks into the crocus-purple hour
That saw thee vanish.

Child, when thou wert gone,
I envied human wives, and nested birds,
Yea, the cubb'd lioness; went in search of thee
Thro' many a palace, many a cot, and gave
Thy breast to ailing infants in the night,
And set the mother waking in amaze
To find her sick one whole; and forth again
Among the wail of midnight winds, and cried,
'Where is my loved one? Wherefore do ye wail?'
And out from all the night an answer shrill'd,
'We know not, and we know not why we wail.'
I climb'd on all the cliffs of all the seas,
And ask'd the waves that moan about the world
'Where? do ye make your moaning for my child?'
And round from all the world the voices came
'We know not, and we know not why we moan.'
'Where'? and I stared from every eagle-peak,
I thridded the black heart of all the woods,

I peer'd thro' tomb and cave, and in the storms
Of Autumn swept across the city, and heard
The murmur of their temples chanting me,
Me, me, the desolate Mother! 'Where'?—and turn'd,
And fled by many a waste, forlorn of man,
And grieved for man thro' all my grief for thee,—
The jungle rooted in his shatter'd hearth,
The serpent coil'd about his broken shaft,
The scorpion crawling over naked skulls;—
I saw the tiger in the ruin'd fane
Spring from his fallen God, but trace of thee
I saw not; and far on, and, following out
A league of labyrinthine darkness, came
On three gray heads beneath a gleaming rift.
'Where'? and I heard one voice from all the three
'We know not, for we spin the lives of men,
And not of Gods, and know not why we spin!
There is a Fate beyond us.' Nothing knew.

Last as the likeness of a dying man,
Without his knowledge, from him flits to warn
A far-off friendship that he comes no more,
So he, the God of dreams, who heard my cry,
Drew from thyself the likeness of thyself
Without thy knowledge, and thy shadow past
Before me, crying 'The Bright one in the highest

Is brother of the Dark one in the lowest,
And Bright and Dark have sworn that I, the child
Of thee, the great Earth-Mother, thee, the Power
That lifts her buried life from gloom to bloom,
Should be for ever and for evermore
Bride of Darkness.'

So the Shadow wail'd.
Then I, Earth-Goddess, cursed the Gods of Heaven.
I would not mingle with their feasts; to me
Their nectar smack'd of hemlock on the lips,
Their rich ambrosia tasted aconite.
The man, that only lives and loves an hour,
Seem'd nobler than their hard Eternities.
My quick tears kill'd the flower, my ravings hush'd
The bird, and lost in utter grief I fail'd
To send my life thro' olive-yard and vine
And golden grain, my gift to helpless man.
Rain-rotten died the wheat, the barley-spears
Were hollow-husk'd, the leaf fell, and the sun,
Pale at my grief, drew down before his time
Sickening, and Ætna kept her winter snow.
Then He, the brother of this Darkness, He
Who still is highest, glancing from his height
On earth a fruitless fallow, when he miss'd
The wonted steam of sacrifice, the praise
And prayer of men, decreed that thou should'st dwell

For nine white moons of each whole year with me,
Three dark ones in the shadow with thy King.

Once more the reaper in the gleam of dawn
Will see me by the landmark far away,
Blessing his field, or seated in the dusk
Of even, by the lonely threshing-floor,
Rejoicing in the harvest and the grange.
Yet I, Earth-Goddess, am but ill-content
With them, who still are highest. Those gray heads,
What meant they by their 'Fate beyond the Fates'
But younger kindlier Gods to bear us down,
As we bore down the Gods before us? Gods,
To quench, not hurl the thunderbolt, to stay,
Not spread the plague, the famine; Gods indeed,
To send the noon into the night and break
The sunless halls of Hades into Heaven?
Till thy dark lord accept and love the Sun,
And all the Shadow die into the Light,
When thou shalt dwell the whole bright year with me,
And souls of men, who grew beyond their race,
And made themselves as Gods against the fear
Of Death and Hell; and thou that hast from men,
As Queen of Death, that worship which is Fear,
Henceforth, as having risen from out the dead,
Shalt ever send thy life along with mine
From buried grain thro' springing blade, and bless

Their garner'd Autumn also, reap with me,
Earth-mother, in the harvest hymns of Earth
The worship which is Love, and see no more
The Stone, the Wheel, the dimly-glimmering lawns
Of that Elysium, all the hateful fires
Of torment, and the shadowy warrior glide
Along the silent field of Asphodel.

OWD ROÄ.[1]

NAÄY, noä mander[2] o' use to be callin' 'im Roä, Roä, Roä,
Fur the dog's stoän-deäf, an' 'e's blind, 'e can naither stan' nor goä.

But I meäns fur to maäke 'is owd aäge as 'appy as iver I can,
Fur I owäs owd Roäver moor nor I iver owäd mottal man.

Thou's rode of 'is back when a babby, afoor thou was gotten too owd,
Fur 'e'd fetch an' carry like owt, 'e was allus as good as gowd.

Eh, but 'e'd fight wi' a will *when* 'e fowt; 'e could howd[3] 'is oan,
An' Roä was the dog as knaw'd when an' wheere to bury his boane.

[1] Old Rover. [2] Manner. [3] Hold.

An' 'e kep his heäd hoop like a king, an' 'e'd niver not down wi' 'is taäil,
Fur 'e'd niver done nowt to be shaämed on, when we was i' Howlaby Daäle.

An' 'e sarved me sa well when 'e lived, that, Dick, when 'e cooms to be deäd,
I thinks as I'd like fur to hev soom soort of a sarvice reäd.

Fur 'e's moor good sense na the Parliament man 'at stans fur us 'ere,
An' I'd voät fur 'im, my oän sen, if 'e could but stan fur the Shere.

'Faäithful an' True'—them words be i' Scriptur—an' Faäithful an' True
Ull be fun'[1] upo' four short legs ten times fur one upo' two.

An' maäybe they'll walk upo' two but I knaws they runs upo' four,[2]—
Bedtime, Dicky! but waäit till tha 'eärs it be strikin' the hour.

Fur I wants to tell tha o' Roä when we lived i' Howlaby Daäle,

[1] Found. [2] 'Ou' as in 'house.'

Ten year sin—Naäy—naäy! tha mun nobbut hev' one glass of aäle.

Straänge an' owd-farran'd [1] the 'ouse, an' belt [2] long afoor my daäy
Wi' haäfe o' the chimleys a-twizzen'd [3] an' twined like a band o' haäy.

The fellers as maäkes them picturs, 'ud coom at the fall o' the year,
An' sattle their ends upo' stools to pictur the door-poorch theere,

An' the Heagle 'as hed two heäds stannin' theere o' the brokken stick; [4]
An' they niver 'ed seed sich ivin' [5] as graw'd hall ower the brick;

An' theere i' the 'ouse one night—but it's down, an' all on it now
Goan into mangles an' tonups, [6] an' raäved slick thruf by the plow—

Theere, when the 'ouse wur a house, one night I wur sittin' aloän,

[1] 'Owd-farran'd,' old-fashioned.
[2] Built.
[3] 'Twizzen'd,' twisted.
[4] On a staff *ragulé*.
[5] Ivy.
[6] Mangolds and turnips.

Wi' Roäver athurt my feeät, an' sleeäpin' still as a stoän,

Of a Christmas Eäve, an' as cowd as this, an' the midders[1] as white,
An' the fences all on 'em bolster'd oop wi' the windle[2] that night;

An' the cat wur a-sleeäpin' alongside Roäver, but I wur awaäke,
An' smoäkin' an' thinkin' o' things—Doänt maäke thsyen sick wi' the caäke.

Fur the men ater supper 'ed sung their songs an' 'ed 'ed their beer,
An' 'ed goän their waäys; ther was nobbut three, an' noän on 'em theere.

They was all on 'em fear'd o' the Ghoäst an' dussn't not sleeäp i' the 'ouse,
But Dicky, the Ghoäst moästlins[3] was nobbut a rat or a mouse.

An' I looökt out wonst[4] at the night, an' the daäle was all of a thaw,

[1] Meadows.
[2] Drifted snow.
[3] 'Moästlins,' for the most part, generally.
[4] Once.

Fur I seed the beck coomin' down like a long black
snaäke i' the snaw,

An' I heärd greät heäps o' the snaw slushin' down
fro' the bank to the beck,
An' then as I stood i' the doorwaäy, I feeäld it drip
o' my neck.

Saw I turn'd in ageän, an' I thowt o' the good owd
times 'at was goan,
An' the munney they maäde by the war, an' the times
'at was coomin' on;

Fur I thowt if the Staäte was agawin' to let in furri-
ners' wheät,
Howiver was British farmers to stan' ageän o' their
feeät.

Howiver was I fur to find my rent an' to paäy my
men?
An' all along o' the feller[1] as turn'd 'is back of
hissen.

Thou slep i' the chaumber above us, we couldn't ha'
'eärd tha call,
Sa Moother 'ed tell'd ma to bring tha down, an' thy
craädle an' all;

[1] Peel.

Fur the gell o' the farm 'at slep wi' tha then 'ed gotten wer leäve,
Fur to goä that night to 'er foälk by cause o' the Christmas Eäve;

But I cleän forgot tha, my lad, when Moother 'ed gotten to bed,
An' I slep i' my chair hup-on-end, an' the Freeä Traäde runn'd i' my 'ead,

Till I dreäm'd 'at Squire walkt in, an' I says to him 'Squire, ya're laäte,'
Then I seed at 'is faäce wur as red as the Yule-block theer i' the graäte.

An' 'e says 'can ya paäy me the rent to-night?' an' I says to 'im 'Noä,'
An' 'e cotch'd howd hard o' my hairm,[1] 'Then hout to-night tha shall goä.'

'Tha'll niver,' says I, 'be a-turnin ma hout upo' Christmas Eäve'?
Then I waäked an' I fun it was Roäver a-tuggin' an' teärin' my slieäve.

An' I thowt as 'e'd goän cleän-wud,[2] fur I noäwaäys knaw'd 'is intent;

[1] Arm. [2] Mad.

An' I says 'Git awaäy, ya beäst,' an' I fetcht 'im a kick an' 'e went.

Then 'e tummled up stairs, fur I 'eärd 'im, as if 'e'd 'a brokken 'is neck,
An' I'd cleär forgot, little Dicky, thy chaumber door wouldn't sneck;[1]

An' I slep' i' my chair ageän wi' my hairm hingin' down to the floor,
An' I thowt it was Roäver a-tuggin' an' teärin' me wuss nor afoor,

An' I thowt 'at I kick'd 'im ageän, but I kick'd thy Moother istead.
'What arta snorin' theere fur? the house is afire,' she said.

Thy Moother 'ed beän a-naggin' about the gell o' the farm,
She offens 'ud spy summut wrong when there warn't not a mossel o' harm;

An' she didn't not solidly meän I wur gawin' that waäy to the bad,
Fur the gell[2] was as howry a trollope as iver traäpes'd i' the squad.

[1] Latch. [2] The girl was as dirty a slut as ever trudged in the mud, but there is a sense of slatternliness in 'traäpes'd' which is not expressed in 'trudged.'

But Moother was free of 'er tongue, as I offens 'ev tell'd 'er mysen,
Sa I kep i' my chair, fur I thowt she was nobbut a-rilin' ma then.

An' I says 'I'd be good to tha, Bess, if tha'd onywaäys let ma be good,'
But she skelpt ma haäfe ower i' the chair, an' screeäd like a Howl gone wud [1]—

'Ya mun run fur the lether.[2] Git oop, if ya're onywaäys good for owt.'
And I says 'If I beänt noäwaäys—not nowadaäys—good fur nowt—

'Yit I beänt sich a Nowt[3] of all Nowts as 'ull hallus do as 'e's bid.'
'But the stairs is afire,' she said; then I seed 'er a-cryin', I did.

An' she beäld 'Ya mun saäve little Dick, an' be sharp about it an' all,'
Sa I runs to the yard fur a lether, an' sets 'im ageän the wall,

[1] She half overturned me and shrieked like an owl gone mad.
[2] Ladder.
[3] A thoroughly insignificant or worthless person.

An' I claums an' I mashes the winder hin, when I gits to the top,
But the heät druv hout i' my heyes till I feäld mysen ready to drop.

Thy Moother was howdin' the lether, an' tellin' me not to be skeärd,
An' I wasn't afeärd, or I thinks leästwaäys as I wasn't afeärd;

But I couldn't see fur the smoäke wheere thou was a-liggin, my lad,
An' Roäver was theere i' the chaumber a-yowlin' an' yaupin' like mad;

An' thou was a-beälin' likewise, an' a-squeälin', as if tha was bit,
An' it wasn't a bite but a burn, fur the merk's[1] o' thy shou'der yit;

Then I call'd out Roä, Roä, Roä, thaw I didn't haäfe think as 'e'd 'eär,
But 'e coom'd thruf the fire wi' my bairn i' 'is mouth to the winder theere!

He coom'd like a Hangel o' marcy as soon as 'e 'eärd 'is naäme,

[1] Mark.

Or like tother Hangel i' Scriptur 'at summun seed i' the flaäme,

When summun 'ed hax'd fur a son, an' 'e promised a son to she,
An' Roä was as good as the Hangel i' saävin' a son fur me.

Sa I browt tha down, an' I says 'I mun gaw up ageän fur Roä.'
'Gaw up ageän fur the varmint?' I tell'd 'er 'Yeäs I mun goä.'

An' I claumb'd up ageän to the winder, an' clemm'd[1] owd Roä by the 'eäd,
An' 'is 'air coom'd off i' my 'ands an' I taäked 'im at fust fur deäd;

Fur 'e smell'd like a herse a-singein', an' seeäm'd as blind as a poop,
An' haäfe on 'im bare as a bublin'.[2] I couldn't wakken 'im oop,

But I browt 'im down, an' we got to the barn, fur the barn wouldn't burn
Wi' the wind blawin' hard tother waäy, an' the wind wasn't like to turn.

[1] Clutched. [2] 'Bubbling,' a young unfledged bird.

An' *I* kep a-callin' o' Roä till 'e waggled 'is taäil fur a bit,
But the cocks kep a-crawin' an' crawin' all night, an' I 'ears 'em yit;

An' the dogs was a-yowlin' all round, and thou was a-squeälin' thysen,
An' Moother was naggin' an' groänin' an' moänin' an' naggin' ageän;

An' I 'eärd the bricks an' the baulks[1] rummle down when the roof gev waäy,
Fur the fire was a-raägin' an' raävin' an' roarin' like judgment daäy.

Warm enew theere sewer-ly, but the barn was as cowd as owt,
An' we cuddled and huddled togither, an' happt[2] wersens oop as we mowt.

An' I browt Roä round, but Moother 'ed beän sa soäk'd wi' the thaw
'At she cotch'd 'er death o' cowd that night, poor soul, i' the straw.

[1] Beams. [2] Wrapt ourselves.

Haäfe o' the parish runn'd oop when the rigtree[1] was
tummlin' in—
Too laäte—but it's all ower now—hall hower—an'
ten year sin;

Too laäte, tha mun git tha to bed, but I'll coom an'
I'll squench the light,
Fur we moänt 'ev naw moor fires—and soa little Dick,
good-night.

[1] The beam that runs along the roof of the house just beneath the ridge.

VASTNESS.

I.

MANY a hearth upon our dark globe sighs after many a vanish'd face,
Many a planet by many a sun may roll with the dust of a vanish'd race.

II.

Raving politics, never at rest—as this poor earth's pale history runs,—
What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million million of suns?

III.

Lies upon this side, lies upon that side, truthless violence mourn'd by the Wise,
Thousands of voices drowning his own in a popular torrent of lies upon lies;

IV.

Stately purposes, valour in battle, glorious annals of army and fleet,

Death for the right cause, death for the wrong cause,
trumpets of victory, groans of defeat;

v.

Innocence seethed in her mother's milk, and Charity
setting the martyr aflame;
Thraldom who walks with the banner of Freedom,
and recks not to ruin a realm in her name.

vi.

Faith at her zenith, or all but lost in the gloom of
doubts that darken the schools;
Craft with a bunch of all-heal in her hand, follow'd
up by her vassal legion of fools;

vii.

Trade flying over a thousand seas with her spice and
her vintage, her silk and her corn;
Desolate offing, sailorless harbours, famishing popu-
lace, wharves forlorn;

viii.

Star of the morning, Hope in the sunrise; gloom of
the evening, Life at a close;
Pleasure who flaunts on her wide down-way with her
flying robe and her poison'd rose;

IX.

Pain, that has crawl'd from the corpse of Pleasure, a worm which writhes all day, and at night
Stirs up again in the heart of the sleeper, and stings him back to the curse of the light;

X.

Wealth with his wines and his wedded harlots; honest Poverty, bare to the bone;
Opulent Avarice, lean as Poverty; Flattery gilding the rift in a throne;

XI.

Fame blowing out from her golden trumpet a jubilant challenge to Time and to Fate;
Slander, her shadow, sowing the nettle on all the laurel'd graves of the Great;

XII.

Love for the maiden, crown'd with marriage, no regrets for aught that has been,
Household happiness, gracious children, debtless competence, golden mean;

XIII.

National hatreds of whole generations, and pigmy spites of the village spire:

Vows that will last to the last death-ruckle, and vows
that are snapt in a moment of fire;

XIV.

He that has lived for the lust of the minute, and died
in the doing it, flesh without mind;
He that has nail'd all flesh to the Cross, till Self died
out in the love of his kind;

XV.

Spring and Summer and Autumn and Winter, and all
these old revolutions of earth;
All new-old revolutions of Empire—change of the
tide—what is all of it worth?

XVI.

What the philosophies, all the sciences, poesy, vary-
ing voices of prayer?
All that is noblest, all that is basest, all that is filthy
with all that is fair?

XVII.

What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our
own corpse-coffins at last,
Swallow'd in Vastness, lost in Silence, drown'd in the
deeps of a meaningless Past?

XVIII.

What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a
moment's anger of bees in their hive?—

* * * * * * * *

Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love him for
ever: the dead are not dead but alive.

Dedicated to the Hon. J. Russell Lowell.

THE RING.

MIRIAM AND HER FATHER.

MIRIAM (*singing*).

MELLOW moon of heaven,
Bright in blue,
Moon of married hearts,
Hear me, you!

Twelve times in the year
Bring me bliss,
Globing Honey Moons
Bright as this.

Moon, you fade at times
From the night.
Young again you grow
Out of sight.

Silver crescent-curve,
Coming soon,
Globe again, and make
Honey Moon.

Shall not *my* love last,
Moon, with you,
For ten thousand years
Old and new?

FATHER.

And who was he with such love-drunken eyes
They made a thousand honey moons of one?

MIRIAM.

The prophet of his own, my Hubert—his
The words, and mine the setting. 'Air and Words,'
Said Hubert, when I sang the song, 'are bride
And bridegroom.' Does it please you?

FATHER.

Mainly, child,
Because I hear your Mother's voice in yours.
She——, why, you shiver tho' the wind is west
With all the warmth of summer.

MIRIAM.

Well, I felt
On a sudden I know not what, a breath that past
With all the cold of winter.

FATHER (*muttering to himself*).

Even so.
The Ghost in Man, the Ghost that once was Man,
But cannot wholly free itself from Man,
Are calling to each other thro' a dawn
Stranger than earth has ever seen; the veil
Is rending, and the Voices of the day
Are heard across the Voices of the dark.
No sudden heaven, nor sudden hell, for man,
But thro' the Will of One who knows and rules—
And utter knowledge is but utter love—
Æonian Evolution, swift or slow,
Thro' all the Spheres—an ever opening height,
An ever lessening earth—and she perhaps,
My Miriam, breaks her latest earthly link
With me to-day.

MIRIAM.

You speak so low, what is it?
Your 'Miriam breaks'—is making a new link
Breaking an old one?

FATHER.

No, for we, my child,
Have been till now each other's all-in-all.

MIRIAM.

And you the lifelong guardian of the child.

FATHER.

I, and one other whom you have not known.

MIRIAM.

And who? what other?

FATHER.

Whither are you bound?
For Naples which we only left in May?

MIRIAM.

No! father, Spain, but Hubert brings me home
With April and the swallow. Wish me joy!

FATHER.

What need to wish when Hubert weds in you
The heart of Love, and you the soul of Truth
In Hubert?

MIRIAM.

Tho' you used to call me once
The lonely maiden-Princess of the wood,
Who meant to sleep her hundred summers out
Before a kiss should wake her.

FATHER.

Ay, but now
Your fairy Prince has found you, take this ring.

MIRIAM.

'Io t'amo'—and these diamonds—beautiful!
'From Walter,' and for me from you then?

FATHER.

Well,
One way for Miriam.

MIRIAM.

Miriam am I not?

FATHER.

This ring bequeath'd you by your mother, child,
Was to be given you—such her dying wish—
Given on the morning when you came of age
Or on the day you married. Both the days
Now close in one. The ring is doubly yours.
Why do you look so gravely at the tower?

MIRIAM.

I never saw it yet so all ablaze
With creepers crimsoning to the pinnacles,
As if perpetual sunset linger'd there,
And all ablaze too in the lake below!
And how the birds that circle round the tower
Are cheeping to each other of their flight
To summer lands!

FATHER.

And that has made you grave?
Fly—care not. Birds and brides must leave the nest.
Child, I am happier in your happiness
Than in mine own.

MIRIAM.

It is not that!

FATHER.

What else?

MIRIAM.

That chamber in the tower.

FATHER.

What chamber, child?
Your nurse is here?

MIRIAM.

My Mother's nurse and mine.
She comes to dress me in my bridal veil.

FATHER.

What did she say?

MIRIAM.

She said, that you and I
Had been abroad for my poor health so long
She fear'd I had forgotten her, and I ask'd
About my Mother, and she said, 'Thy hair
Is golden like thy Mother's, not so fine.'

FATHER.

What then? what more?

MIRIAM.

She said—perhaps indeed
She wander'd, having wander'd now so far
Beyond the common date of death—that you,
When I was smaller than the statuette
Of my dear Mother on your bracket here—
You took me to that chamber in the tower,
The topmost—a chest there, by which you knelt—
And there were books and dresses—left to me,
A ring too which you kiss'd, and I, she said,

I babbled, Mother, Mother—as I used
To prattle to her picture—stretch'd my hands
As if I saw her; then a woman came
And caught me from my nurse. I hear her yet—
A sound of anger like a distant storm.

FATHER.

Garrulous old crone.

MIRIAM.

Poor nurse!

FATHER.

I bad her keep,
Like a seal'd book, all mention of the ring,
For I myself would tell you all to-day.

MIRIAM.

'She too might speak to-day,' she mumbled. Still,
I scarce have learnt the title of your book,
But you will turn the pages.

FATHER.

Ay, to-day!
I brought you to that chamber on your third
September birthday with your nurse, and felt
An icy breath play on me, while I stoopt
To take and kiss the ring.

MIRIAM.

This very ring
Io t'amo?

FATHER.

Yes, for some wild hope was mine
That, in the misery of my married life,
Miriam your Mother might appear to me.
She came to you, not me. The storm, you hear
Far-off, is Muriel—your step-mother's voice.

MIRIAM.

Vext, that you thought my Mother came to me?
Or at my crying 'Mother?' or to find
My Mother's diamonds hidden from her there,
Like worldly beauties in the Cell, not shown
To dazzle all that see them?

FATHER.

Wait a while.
Your Mother and step-mother—Miriam Erne
And Muriel Erne—the two were cousins—lived
With Muriel's mother on the down, that sees
A thousand squares of corn and meadow, far
As the gray deep, a landscape which your eyes
Have many a time ranged over when a babe.

MIRIAM.

I climb'd the hill with Hubert yesterday,
And from the thousand squares, one silent voice
Came on the wind, and seem'd to say 'Again.'
We saw far off an old forsaken house,
Then home, and past the ruin'd mill.

FATHER.

And there
I found these cousins often by the brook,
For Miriam sketch'd and Muriel threw the fly;
The girls of equal age, but one was fair,
And one was dark, and both were beautiful.
No voice for either spoke within my heart
Then, for the surface eye, that only doats
On outward beauty, glancing from the one
To the other, knew not that which pleased it most,
The raven ringlet or the gold; but both
Were dowerless, and myself, I used to walk
This Terrace—morbid, melancholy; mine
And yet not mine the hall, the farm, the field;
For all that ample woodland whisper'd 'debt,'
The brook that feeds this lakelet murmur'd 'debt,'
And in yon arching avenue of old elms,
Tho' mine, not mine, I heard the sober rook
And carrion crow cry 'Mortgage.'

MIRIAM.

Father's fault
Visited on the children!

FATHER.

Ay, but then
A kinsman, dying, summon'd me to Rome—
He left me wealth—and while I journey'd hence,
And saw the world fly by me like a dream,
And while I communed with my truest self,
I woke to all of truest in myself,
Till, in the gleam of those mid-summer dawns,
The form of Muriel faded, and the face
Of Miriam grew upon me, till I knew;
And past and future mix'd in Heaven and made
The rosy twilight of a perfect day.

MIRIAM.

So glad? no tear for him, who left you wealth,
Your kinsman?

FATHER.

I had seen the man but once;
He loved my name not me; and then I pass'd
Home, and thro' Venice, where a jeweller,
So far gone down, or so far up in life,
That he was nearing his own hundred, sold

This ring to me, then laugh'd 'the ring is weird.'
And weird and worn and wizard-like was he.
'Why weird?' I ask'd him; and he said 'The souls
Of two repentant Lovers guard the ring;'
Then with a ribald twinkle in his bleak eyes—
'And if you give the ring to any maid,
They still remember what it cost them here,
And bind the maid to love you by the ring;
And if the ring were stolen from the maid,
The theft were death or madness to the thief,
So sacred those Ghost Lovers hold the gift.'
And then he told their legend:

'Long ago
Two lovers parted by a scurrilous tale
Had quarrell'd, till the man repenting sent
This ring "Io t'amo" to his best beloved,
And sent it on her birthday. She in wrath
Return'd it on her birthday, and that day
His death-day, when, half-frenzied by the ring,
He wildly fought a rival suitor, him
The causer of that scandal, fought and fell;
And she that came to part them all too late,
And found a corpse and silence, drew the ring
From his dead finger, wore it till her death,
Shrined him within the temple of her heart,
Made every moment of her after life

A virgin victim to his memory,
And dying rose, and rear'd her arms, and cried
"I see him, Io t'amo, Io t'amo."'

MIRIAM.

Legend or true? so tender should be true!
Did *he* believe it? did you ask him?

FATHER.

Ay!
But that half skeleton, like a barren ghost
From out the fleshless world of spirits, laugh'd:
A hollow laughter!

MIRIAM.

Vile, so near the ghost
Himself, to laugh at love in death! But you?

FATHER.

Well, as the bygone lover thro' this ring
Had sent his cry for her forgiveness, I
Would call thro' this 'Io t'amo' to the heart
Of Miriam; then I bad the man engrave
'From Walter' on the ring, and send it—wrote
Name, surname, all as clear as noon, but he—
Some younger hand must have engraven the ring—
His fingers were so stiffen'd by the frost

Of seven and ninety winters, that he scrawl'd
A 'Miriam' that might seem a 'Muriel';
And Muriel claim'd and open'd what I meant
For Miriam, took the ring, and flaunted it
Before that other whom I loved and love.
A mountain stay'd me here, a minster there,
A galleried palace, or a battlefield,
Where stood the sheaf of Peace: but—coming home—
And on your Mother's birthday—all but yours—
A week betwixt—and when the tower as now
Was all ablaze with crimson to the roof,
And all ablaze too plunging in the lake
Head-foremost—who were those that stood between
The tower and that rich phantom of the tower?
Muriel and Miriam, each in white, and like
May-blossoms in mid autumn—was it they?
A light shot upward on them from the lake.
What sparkled there? whose hand was that? they stood
So close together. I am not keen of sight,
But coming nearer—Muriel had the ring—
'O Miriam! have you given your ring to her?
O Miriam!' Miriam redden'd, Muriel clench'd
The hand that wore it, till I cried again:
'O Miriam, if you love me take the ring!'
She glanced at me, at Muriel, and was mute.
'Nay, if you cannot love me, let it be.'
Then—Muriel standing ever statue-like—

She turn'd, and in her soft imperial way
And saying gently: 'Muriel, by your leave,'
Unclosed the hand, and from it drew the ring,
And gave it me, who pass'd it down her own,
'Io t'amo, all is well then.' Muriel fled.

MIRIAM.

Poor Muriel!

FATHER.

Ay, poor Muriel, when you hear
What follows! Miriam loved me from the first,
Not thro' the ring; but on her marriage-morn
This birthday, death-day, and betrothal ring,
Laid on her table overnight, was gone;
And after hours of search and doubt and threats,
And hubbub, Muriel enter'd with it, 'See!—
Found in a chink of that old moulder'd floor!'
My Miriam nodded with a pitying smile,
As who should say 'that those who lose can find.'
Then I and she were married for a year,
One year without a storm, or even a cloud;
And you my Miriam born within the year;
And she my Miriam dead within the year.
I sat beside her dying, and she gaspt:
'The books, the miniature, the lace are hers,
My ring too when she comes of age, or when
She marries; you—you loved me, kept your word.

You love me still "Io t'amo."—Muriel—no—
She cannot love; she loves her own hard self,
Her firm will, her fix'd purpose. Promise me,
Miriam not Muriel—she shall have the ring.'
And there the light of other life, which lives
Beyond our burial and our buried eyes,
Gleam'd for a moment in her own on earth.
I swore the vow, then with my latest kiss
Upon them, closed her eyes, which would not close,
But kept their watch upon the ring and you.
Your birthday was her death-day.

MIRIAM.

O poor Mother!
And you, poor desolate Father, and poor me,
The little senseless, worthless, wordless babe,
Saved when your life was wreck'd!

FATHER.

Desolate? yes!
Desolate as that sailor, whom the storm
Had parted from his comrade in the boat,
And dash'd half dead on barren sands, was I.
Nay, you were my one solace; only—you
Were always ailing. Muriel's mother sent,
And sure am I, by Muriel, one day came
And saw you, shook her head, and patted yours,

And smiled, and making with a kindly pinch
Each poor pale cheek a momentary rose—
'*That* should be fix'd,' she said; 'your pretty bud,
So blighted here, would flower into full health
Among our heath and bracken. Let her come!
And we will feed her with our mountain air,
And send her home to you rejoicing.' No—
We could not part. And once, when you my girl
Rode on my shoulder home—the tiny fist
Had graspt a daisy from your Mother's grave—
By the lych-gate was Muriel. 'Ay,' she said,
'Among the tombs in this damp vale of yours!
You scorn my Mother's warning, but the child
Is paler than before. We often walk
In open sun, and see beneath our feet
The mist of autumn gather from your lake,
And shroud the tower; and once we only saw
Your gilded vane, a light above the mist'—
(Our old bright bird that still is veering there
Above his four gold letters) 'and the light,'
She said, 'was like that light'—and there she paused,
And long; till I believing that the girl's
Lean fancy, groping for it, could not find
One likeness, laugh'd a little and found her two—
'A warrior's crest above the cloud of war'—
'A fiery phœnix rising from the smoke,
The pyre he burnt in.'—'Nay,' she said, 'the light

That glimmers on the marsh and on the grave.'
And spoke no more, but turn'd and pass'd away.
Miriam, I am not surely one of those
Caught by the flower that closes on the fly,
But after ten slow weeks her fix'd intent,
In aiming at an all but hopeless mark
To strike it, struck; I took, I left you there;
I came, I went, was happier day by day;
For Muriel nursed you with a mother's care;
Till on that clear and heather-scented height
The rounder cheek had brighten'd into bloom.
She always came to meet me carrying you,
And all her talk was of the babe she loved;
So, following her old pastime of the brook,
She threw the fly for me; but oftener left
That angling to the mother. 'Muriel's health
Had weaken'd, nursing little Miriam. Strange!
She used to shun the wailing babe, and doats
On this of yours.' But when the matron saw
That hinted love was only wasted bait,
Not risen to, she was bolder. 'Ever since
You sent the fatal ring'—I told her 'sent
To Miriam,' 'Doubtless—ay, but ever since
In all the world my dear one sees but you—
In your sweet babe she finds but you—she makes
Her heart a mirror that reflects but you.'
And then the tear fell, the voice broke. *Her* heart!

I gazed into the mirror, as a man
Who sees his face in water, and a stone,
That glances from the bottom of the pool,
Strike upward thro' the shadow; yet at last,
Gratitude—loneliness—desire to keep
So skilled a nurse about you always—nay!
Some half remorseful kind of pity too—
Well! well, you know I married Muriel Erne.
'I take thee Muriel for my wedded wife'—
I had forgotten it was your birthday, child—
When all at once with some electric thrill
A cold air pass'd between us, and the hands
Fell from each other, and were join'd again.
No second cloudless honeymoon was mine.
For by and by she sicken'd of the farce,
She dropt the gracious mask of motherhood,
She came no more to meet me, carrying you,
Nor ever cared to set you on her knee,
Nor ever let you gambol in her sight,
Nor ever cheer'd you with a kindly smile,
Nor ever ceased to clamour for the ring;
Why had I sent the ring at first to her?
Why had I made her love me thro' the ring,
And then had changed? so fickle are men—the best!
Not she—but now my love was hers again,
The ring by right, she said, was hers again.
At times too shrilling in her angrier moods,

'That weak and watery nature love you? No!
"*Io* t'amo, *Io* t'amo"!' flung herself
Against my heart, but often while her lips
Were warm upon my cheek, an icy breath,
As from the grating of a sepulchre,
Past over both. I told her of my vow,
No pliable idiot I to break my vow;
But still she made her outcry for the ring;
For one monotonous fancy madden'd her,
Till I myself was madden'd with her cry,
And even that 'Io t'amo,' those three sweet
Italian words, became a weariness.

My people too were scared with eerie sounds,
A footstep, a low throbbing in the walls,
A noise of falling weights that never fell,
Weird whispers, bells that rang without a hand,
Door-handles turn'd when none was at the door,
And bolted doors that open'd of themselves:
And one betwixt the dark and light had seen
Her, bending by the cradle of her babe.

MIRIAM.

And I remember once that being waked
By noises in the house—and no one near—
I cried for nurse, and felt a gentle hand
Fall on my forehead, and a sudden face

Look'd in upon me like a gleam and pass'd,
And I was quieted, and slept again.
Or is it some half memory of a dream?

FATHER.

Your fifth September birthday.

MIRIAM.

And the face,
The hand,—my Mother.

FATHER.

Miriam, on that day
Two lovers parted by no scurrilous tale—
Mere want of gold—and still for twenty years
Bound by the golden cord of their first love—
Had ask'd us to their marriage, and to share
Their marriage-banquet. Muriel, paler then
Than ever you were in your cradle, moan'd,
'I am fitter for my bed, or for my grave,
I cannot go, go you.' And then she rose,
She clung to me with such a hard embrace,
So lingeringly long, that half-amazed
I parted from her, and I went alone.
And when the bridegroom murmur'd, 'With this ring,'
I felt for what I could not find, the key,
The guardian of her relics, of *her* ring.

I kept it as a sacred amulet
About me,—gone! and gone in that embrace!
Then, hurrying home, I found her not in house
Or garden—up the tower—an icy air
Fled by me.—There, the chest was open—all
The sacred relics tost about the floor—
Among them Muriel lying on her face—
I raised her, call'd her 'Muriel, Muriel wake!'
The fatal ring lay near her; the glazed eye
Glared at me as in horror. Dead! I took
And chafed the freezing hand. A red mark ran
All round one finger pointed straight, the rest
Were crumpled inwards. Dead!—and maybe stung
With some remorse, had stolen, worn the ring—
Then torn it from her finger, or as if—
For never had I seen her show remorse—
As if—

MIRIAM.

—those two Ghost lovers—

FATHER.

Lovers yet—

MIRIAM.

Yes, yes!

FATHER.

—but dead so long, gone up so far,
That now their ever-rising life has dwarf'd

Or lost the moment of their past on earth,
As we forget our wail at being born.
As if—

MIRIAM.

a dearer ghost had—

FATHER.

—wrench'd it away.

MIRIAM.

Had floated in with sad reproachful eyes,
Till from her own hand she had torn the ring
In fright, and fallen dead. And I myself
Am half afraid to wear it.

FATHER.

Well, no more!
No bridal music this! but fear not you!
You have the ring she guarded; that poor link
With earth is broken, and has left her free,
Except that, still drawn downward for an hour,
Her spirit hovering by the church, where she
Was married too, may linger, till she sees
Her maiden coming like a Queen, who leaves
Some colder province in the North to gain
Her capital city, where the loyal bells
Clash welcome—linger, till her own, the babe

She lean'd to from her Spiritual sphere,
Her lonely maiden-Princess, crown'd with flowers,
Has enter'd on the larger woman-world
Of wives and mothers.

But the bridal veil—
Your nurse is waiting. Kiss me child and go.

FORLORN.

I.

'He is fled—I wish him dead—
He that wrought my ruin—
O the flattery and the craft
Which were my undoing . . .
In the night, in the night,
When the storms are blowing.

II.

'Who was witness of the crime?
Who shall now reveal it?
He is fled, or he is dead,
Marriage will conceal it . . .
In the night, in the night,
While the gloom is growing.'

III.

Catherine, Catherine, in the night
What is this you're dreaming?
There is laughter down in Hell
At your simple scheming . . .

In the night, in the night,
When the ghosts are fleeting.

IV.

You to place a hand in his
Like an honest woman's,
You that lie with wasted lungs
Waiting for your summons . . .
In the night, O the night!
O the deathwatch beating!

V.

There will come a witness soon
Hard to be confuted,
All the world will hear a voice
Scream you are polluted . . .
In the night! O the night,
When the owls are wailing!

VI.

Shame and marriage, Shame and marriage,
Fright and foul dissembling,
Bantering bridesman, reddening priest,
Tower and altar trembling . . .
In the night, O the night,
When the mind is failing!

VII.

Mother, dare you kill your child?
How your hand is shaking!
Daughter of the seed of Cain,
What is this you're taking? . .
In the night, O the night,
While the house is sleeping.

VIII.

Dreadful! has it come to this,
O unhappy creature?
You that would not tread on a worm
For your gentle nature . . .
In the night, O the night,
O the night of weeping!

IX.

Murder would not veil your sin,
Marriage will not hide it,
Earth and Hell will brand your name,
Wretch you must abide it . . .
In the night, O the night,
Long before the dawning.

X.

Up, get up, and tell him all,
Tell him you were lying!

Do not die with a lie in your mouth,
You that know you're dying . . .
In the night, O the night,
While the grave is yawning.

XI.

No—you will not die before,
Tho' you'll ne'er be stronger;
You will live till *that* is born,
Then a little longer . . .
In the night, O the night,
While the Fiend is prowling.

XII.

Death and marriage, Death and marriage!
Funeral hearses rolling!
Black with bridal favours mixt!
Bridal bells with tolling! . . .
In the night, O the night,
When the wolves are howling.

XIII.

Up, get up, the time is short,
Tell him now or never!
Tell him all before you die,
Lest you die for ever . . .
In the night, O the night,
Where there's no forgetting.

XIV.

Up she got, and wrote him all,
All her tale of sadness,
Blister'd every word with tears,
And eased her heart of madness . .
In the night, and nigh the dawn,
And while the moon was setting.

HAPPY.

THE LEPER'S BRIDE.

I.

WHY wail you, pretty plover? and what is it that you fear?
Is he sick your mate like mine? have you lost him, is he fled?
And there—the heron rises from his watch beside the mere,
And flies above the leper's hut, where lives the living-dead.

II.

Come back, nor let me know it! would he live and die alone?
And has he not forgiven me yet, his over-jealous bride,
Who am, and was, and will be his, his own and only own,
To share his living death with him, die with him side by side?

III.

Is that the leper's hut on the solitary moor,
Where noble Ulric dwells forlorn, and wears the leper's weed?
The door is open. He! is he standing at the door,
My soldier of the Cross? it is he and he indeed!

IV.

My roses—will he take them *now*—mine, his—from off the tree
We planted both together, happy in our marriage morn?
O God, I could blaspheme, for he fought Thy fight for Thee,
And Thou hast made him leper to compass him with scorn—

V.

Hast spared the flesh of thousands, the coward and the base,
And set a crueller mark than Cain's on him, the good and brave!
He sees me, waves me from him. I will front him face to face.
You need not wave me from you. I would leap into your grave.

* * * * * * * *

VI.

My warrior of the Holy Cross and of the conquering sword,
The roses that you cast aside—once more I bring you these.
No nearer? do you scorn me when you tell me, O my lord,
You would not mar the beauty of your bride with your disease.

VII.

You say your body is so foul—then here I stand apart,
Who yearn to lay my loving head upon your leprous breast.
The leper plague may scale my skin but never taint my heart;
Your body is not foul to me, and body is foul at best.

VIII.

I loved you first when young and fair, but now I love you most;
The fairest flesh at last is filth on which the worm will feast;
This poor rib-grated dungeon of the holy human ghost,
This house with all its hateful needs no cleaner than the beast,

IX.

This coarse diseaseful creature which in Eden was divine,
This Satan-haunted ruin, this little city of sewers,
This wall of solid flesh that comes between your soul and mine,
Will vanish and give place to the beauty that endures,

X.

The beauty that endures on the Spiritual height,
When we shall stand transfigured, like Christ on Hermon hill,
And moving each to music, soul in soul and light in light,
Shall flash thro' one another in a moment as we will.

XI.

Foul! foul! the word was yours not mine, I worship that right hand
Which fell'd the foes before you as the woodman fells the wood,
And sway'd the sword that lighten'd back the sun of Holy land,
And clove the Moslem crescent moon, and changed it into blood.

XII.

And once I worshipt all too well this creature of decay,
For Age will chink the face, and Death will freeze the supplest limbs—
Yet you in your mid manhood—O the grief when yesterday
They bore the Cross before you to the chant of funeral hymns.

XIII.

'Libera me, Domine!' you sang the Psalm, and when
The Priest pronounced you dead, and flung the mould upon your feet,
A beauty came upon your face, not that of living men,
But seen upon the silent brow when life has ceased to beat.

XIV.

'Libera *nos*, Domine'—you knew not one was there
Who saw you kneel beside your bier, and weeping scarce could see;
May I come a little nearer, I that heard, and changed the prayer
And sang the married 'nos' for the solitary 'me.'

XV.

My beauty marred by you? by you! so be it. All is well
If I lose it and myself in the higher beauty, yours.
My beauty lured that falcon from his eyry on the fell,
Who never caught one gleam of the beauty which endures—

XVI.

The Count who sought to snap the bond that link'd us life to life,
Who whisper'd me 'your Ulric loves'—a little nearer still—
He hiss'd, 'Let us revenge ourselves, your Ulric woos my wife'—
A lie by which he thought he could subdue me to his will.

XVII.

I knew that you were near me when I let him kiss my brow;
Did he touch me on the lips? I was jealous, anger'd, vain,
And I meant to make *you* jealous. Are you jealous of me now?
Your pardon, O my love, if I ever gave you pain.

XVIII.

You never once accused me, but I wept alone, and sigh'd
In the winter of the Present for the summer of the Past;
That icy winter silence—how it froze you from your bride,
Tho' I made one barren effort to break it at the last.

XIX.

I brought you, you remember, these roses, when I knew
You were parting for the war, and you took them tho' you frown'd;
You frown'd and yet you kiss'd them. All at once the trumpet blew,
And you spurr'd your fiery horse, and you hurl'd them to the ground.

XX.

You parted for the Holy War without a word to me,
And clear myself unask'd—not I. My nature was too proud.
And him I saw but once again, and far away was he,
When I was praying in a storm—the crash was long and loud—

XXI.

That God would ever slant His bolt from falling on your head—
Then I lifted up my eyes, he was coming down the fell—
I clapt my hands. The sudden fire from Heaven had dash'd him dead,
And sent him charr'd and blasted to the deathless fire of Hell.

XXII.

See, I sinn'd but for a moment. I repented and repent,
And trust myself forgiven by the God to whom I kneel.
A little nearer? Yes. I shall hardly be content
Till I be leper like yourself, my love, from head to heel.

XXIII.

O foolish dreams, that you, that I, would slight our marriage oath:
I held you at that moment even dearer than before;
Now God has made you leper in His loving care for both,
That we might cling together, never doubt each other more.

XXIV.

The Priest, who join'd you to the dead, has join'd our hands of old;
If man and wife be but one flesh, let mine be leprous too,
As dead from all the human race as if beneath the mould;
If you be dead, then I am dead, who only live for you.

XXV.

Would Earth tho' hid in cloud not be follow'd by the Moon?
The leech forsake the dying bed for terror of his life?
The shadow leave the Substance in the brooding light of noon?
Or if *I* had been the leper would you have left the wife?

XXVI.

Not take them? Still you wave me off—poor roses—must I go—
I have worn them year by year—from the bush we both had set—
What? fling them to you?—well—that were hardly gracious. No!

Your plague but passes by the touch. A little
nearer yet!

XXVII.

There, there! he buried you, the Priest; the Priest is
not to blame,
He joins us once again, to his either office true:
I thank him. I am happy, happy. Kiss me. In
the name
Of the everlasting God, I will live and die with
you.

[DEAN MILMAN has remarked that the protection and care afforded by the Church to this blighted race of lepers was among the most beautiful of its offices during the Middle Ages. The leprosy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was supposed to be a legacy of the crusades, but was in all probability the offspring of meagre and unwholesome diet, miserable lodging and clothing, physical and moral degradation. The services of the Church in the seclusion of these unhappy sufferers were most affecting. The stern duty of looking to the public welfare is tempered with exquisite compassion for the victims of this loathsome disease. The ritual for the sequestration of the leprous differed little from the burial service. After the leper had been sprinkled with holy water, the priest conducted him into the church, the leper singing the psalm 'Libera me domine,' and the crucifix and bearer going before. In the church a black cloth was stretched over two trestles in front of the altar, and the leper leaning at its side devoutly heard mass. The priest, taking up a little earth in his cloak, threw it on one of the leper's feet, and put him out of the church, if it did not rain too heavily; took him to his hut in the midst of the fields, and then uttered the prohibitions: 'I forbid you entering the church

. . . or entering the company of others. I forbid you quitting your home without your leper's dress.' He concluded: 'Take this dress, and wear it in token of humility; take these gloves, take this clapper, as a sign that you are forbidden to speak to any one. You are not to be indignant at being thus separated from others, and as to your little wants, good people will provide for you, and God will not desert you.' Then in this old ritual follow these sad words: 'When it shall come to pass that the leper shall pass out of this world, he shall be buried in his hut, and not in the churchyard.' At first there was a doubt whether wives should follow their husbands who had been leprous, or remain in the world and marry again. The Church decided that the marriage-tie was indissoluble, and so bestowed on these unhappy beings this immense source of consolation. With a love stronger than this living death, lepers were followed into banishment from the haunts of men by their faithful wives. Readers of Sir J. Stephen's *Essays on Ecclesiastical Biography* will recollect the description of the founder of the Franciscan order, how, controlling his involuntary disgust, St. Francis of Assisi washed the feet and dressed the sores of the lepers, once at least reverently applying his lips to their wounds.—BOUCHER-JAMES.]

This ceremony of *quasi*-burial varied considerably at different times and in different places. In some cases a grave was dug, and the leper's face was often covered during the service.

TO ULYSSES.[1]

I.

ULYSSES, much-experienced man,
Whose eyes have known this globe of ours,
Her tribes of men, and trees and flowers,
From Corrientes to Japan,

II.

To you that bask below the Line,
I soaking here in winter wet—
The century's three strong eights have met
To drag me down to seventy-nine.

III.

In summer if I reach my day—
To you, yet young, who breathe the balm
Of summer-winters by the palm
And orange grove of Paraguay,

[1] 'Ulysses,' the title of a number of essays by W. G. Palgrave. He died at Monte Video before seeing my poem.

IV.

I tolerant of the colder time,
  Who love the winter woods, to trace
  On paler heavens the branching grace
Of leafless elm, or naked lime,

V.

And see my cedar green, and there
  My giant ilex keeping leaf
  When frost is keen and days are brief—
Or marvel how in English air

VI.

My yucca, which no winter quells,
  Altho' the months have scarce begun,
  Has push'd toward our faintest sun
A spike of half-accomplish'd bells—

VII.

Or watch the waving pine which here
  The warrior of Caprera set,[1]
  A name that earth will not forget
Till earth has roll'd her latest year—

[1] Garibaldi said to me, alluding to his barren island, 'I wish I had your trees.'

VIII.

I, once half-crazed for larger light
On broader zones beyond the foam,
But chaining fancy now at home
Among the quarried downs of Wight,

IX.

Not less would yield full thanks to you
For your rich gift, your tale of lands
I know not,[1] your Arabian sands;
Your cane, your palm, tree-fern, bamboo,

X.

The wealth of tropic bower and brake;
Your Oriental Eden-isles,[2]
Where man, nor only Nature smiles;
Your wonder of the boiling lake;[3]

XI.

Phra-Chai, the Shadow of the Best,[4]
Phra-bat[5] the step; your Pontic coast;

[1] The tale of Nejd. [2] The Philippines. [3] In Dominica.
[4] The Shadow of the Lord. Certain obscure markings on a rock in Siam, which express the image of Buddha to the Buddhist more or less distinctly according to his faith and his moral worth.
[5] The footstep of the Lord on another rock.

Crag-cloister;[1] Anatolian Ghost;[2]
Hong-Kong,[3] Karnac,[4] and all the rest.

XII.

Thro' which I follow'd line by line
Your leading hand, and came, my friend,
To prize your various book, and send
A gift of slenderer value, mine.

[1] The monastery of Sumelas.
[2] Anatolian Spectre stories.
[3] The Three Cities.
[4] Travels in Egypt.

TO MARY BOYLE.

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM.

I.

'SPRING-FLOWERS'! While you still delay to take
Your leave of Town,
Our elmtree's ruddy-hearted blossom-flake
Is fluttering down.

II.

Be truer to your promise. There! I heard
Our cuckoo call.
Be needle to the magnet of your word,
Nor wait, till all

III.

Our vernal bloom from every vale and plain
And garden pass,
And all the gold from each laburnum chain
Drop to the grass.

IV.

Is memory with your Marian gone to rest,
Dead with the dead?
For ere she left us, when we met, you prest
My hand, and said

V.

'I come with your spring-flowers.' You came not, friend;
My birds would sing,
You heard not. Take then this spring-flower I send,
This song of spring,

VI.

Found yesterday—forgotten mine own rhyme
By mine old self,
As I shall be forgotten by old Time,
Laid on the shelf—

VII.

A rhyme that flower'd betwixt the whitening sloe
And kingcup blaze,
And more than half a hundred years ago,
In rick-fire days,

VIII.

When Dives loathed the times, and paced his land
In fear of worse,
And sanguine Lazarus felt a vacant hand
Fill with *his* purse.

IX.

For lowly minds were madden'd to the height
By tonguester tricks,
And once—I well remember that red night
When thirty ricks,

X.

All flaming, made an English homestead Hell—
These hands of mine
Have helpt to pass a bucket from the well
Along the line,

XI.

When this bare dome had not begun to gleam
Thro' youthful curls,
And you were then a lover's fairy dream,
His girl of girls;

XII.

And you, that now are lonely, and with Grief
Sit face to face,
Might find a flickering glimmer of relief
In change of place.

XIII.

What use to brood? this life of mingled pains
And joys to me,
Despite of every Faith and Creed, remains
The Mystery.

XIV.

Let golden youth bewail the friend, the wife,
For ever gone.
He dreams of that long walk thro' desert life
Without the one.

XV.

The silver year should cease to mourn and sigh—
Not long to wait—
So close are we, dear Mary, you and I
To that dim gate.

XVI.

Take, read! and be the faults your Poet makes
Or many or few,
He rests content, if his young music wakes
A wish in you

XVII.

To change our dark Queen-city, all her realm
Of sound and smoke,
For his clear heaven, and these few lanes of elm
And whispering oak.

THE PROGRESS OF SPRING.

I.

THE groundflame of the crocus breaks the mould,
Fair Spring slides hither o'er the Southern sea,
Wavers on her thin stem the snowdrop cold
That trembles not to kisses of the bee:
Come, Spring, for now from all the dripping eaves
The spear of ice has wept itself away,
And hour by hour unfolding woodbine leaves
O'er his uncertain shadow droops the day.
She comes! The loosen'd rivulets run;
The frost-bead melts upon her golden hair;
Her mantle, slowly greening in the Sun,
Now wraps her close, now arching leaves her bare
To breaths of balmier air;

II.

Up leaps the lark, gone wild to welcome her,
About her glance the tits, and shriek the jays,

Before her skims the jubilant woodpecker,
The linnet's bosom blushes at her gaze,
While round her brows a woodland culver flits,
Watching her large light eyes and gracious looks,
And in her open palm a halcyon sits
Patient—the secret splendour of the brooks.
Come, Spring! She comes on waste and wood,
On farm and field: but enter also here,
Diffuse thyself at will thro' all my blood,
And, tho' thy violet sicken into sere,
Lodge with me all the year!

III.

Once more a downy drift against the brakes,
Self-darken'd in the sky, descending slow!
But gladly see I thro' the wavering flakes
Yon blanching apricot like snow in snow.
These will thine eyes not brook in forest-paths,
On their perpetual pine, nor round the beech;
They fuse themselves to little spicy baths,
Solved in the tender blushes of the peach;
They lose themselves and die
On that new life that gems the hawthorn line;
Thy gay lent-lilies wave and put them by,
And out once more in varnish'd glory shine
Thy stars of celandine.

IV.

She floats across the hamlet. Heaven lours,
But in the tearful splendour of her smiles
I see the slowly-thickening chestnut towers
Fill out the spaces by the barren tiles.
Now past her feet the swallow circling flies,
A clamorous cuckoo stoops to meet her hand;
Her light makes rainbows in my closing eyes,
I hear a charm of song thro' all the land.
Come, Spring! She comes, and Earth is glad
To roll her North below thy deepening dome,
But ere thy maiden birk be wholly clad,
And these low bushes dip their twigs in foam,
Make all true hearths thy home.

V.

Across my garden! and the thicket stirs,
The fountain pulses high in sunnier jets,
The blackcap warbles, and the turtle purrs,
The starling claps his tiny castanets.
Still round her forehead wheels the woodland dove,
And scatters on her throat the sparks of dew,
The kingcup fills her footprint, and above
Broaden the glowing isles of vernal blue.
Hail ample presence of a Queen,

Bountiful, beautiful, apparell'd gay,
Whose mantle, every shade of glancing green,
Flies back in fragrant breezes to display
A tunic white as May!

VI.

She whispers, 'From the South I bring you balm,
For on a tropic mountain was I born,
While some dark dweller by the coco-palm
Watch'd my far meadow zoned with airy morn;
From under rose a muffled moan of floods;
I sat beneath a solitude of snow;
There no one came, the turf was fresh, the woods
Plunged gulf on gulf thro' all their vales below.
I saw beyond their silent tops
The steaming marshes of the scarlet cranes,
The slant seas leaning on the mangrove copse,
And summer basking in the sultry plains
About a land of canes;

VII.

'Then from my vapour-girdle soaring forth
I scaled the buoyant highway of the birds,
And drank the dews and drizzle of the North,
That I might mix with men, and hear their words

On pathway'd plains; for—while my hand exults
Within the bloodless heart of lowly flowers
To work old laws of Love to fresh results,
Thro' manifold effect of simple powers—
I too would teach the man
Beyond the darker hour to see the bright,
That his fresh life may close as it began,
The still-fulfilling promise of a light
Narrowing the bounds of night.'

VIII.

So wed thee with my soul, that I may mark
The coming year's great good and varied ills,
And new developments, whatever spark
Be struck from out the clash of warring wills;
Or whether, since our nature cannot rest,
The smoke of war's volcano burst again
From hoary deeps that belt the changeful West,
Old Empires, dwellings of the kings of men;
Or should those fail, that hold the helm,
While the long day of knowledge grows and warms,
And in the heart of this most ancient realm
A hateful voice be utter'd, and alarms
Sounding 'To arms! to arms!'

IX.

A simpler, saner lesson might he learn
Who reads thy gradual process, Holy Spring.
Thy leaves possess the season in their turn,
And in their time thy warblers rise on wing.
How surely glidest thou from March to May,
And changest, breathing it, the sullen wind,
Thy scope of operation, day by day,
Larger and fuller, like the human mind!
Thy warmths from bud to bud
Accomplish that blind model in the seed,
And men have hopes, which race the restless blood,
That after many changes may succeed
Life, which is Life indeed.

MERLIN AND THE GLEAM.

I.

O YOUNG Mariner,
You from the haven
Under the sea-cliff,
You that are watching
The gray Magician
With eyes of wonder,
I am Merlin,
And *I* am dying,
I am Merlin
Who follow The Gleam.

II.

Mighty the Wizard
Who found me at sunrise
Sleeping, and woke me
And learn'd me Magic!
Great the Master,
And sweet the Magic,
When over the valley,

In early summers,
Over the mountain,
On human faces,
And all around me,
Moving to melody,
Floated The Gleam.

III.

Once at the croak of a Raven who
crost it,
A barbarous people,
Blind to the magic,
And deaf to the melody,
Snarl'd at and cursed me.
A demon vext me,
The light retreated,
The landskip darken'd,
The melody deaden'd,
The Master whisper'd
'Follow The Gleam.'

IV.

Then to the melody,
Over a wilderness
Gliding, and glancing at
Elf of the woodland,

Gnome of the cavern,
Griffin and Giant,
And dancing of Fairies
In desolate hollows,
And wraiths of the mountain,
And rolling of dragons
By warble of water,
Or cataract music
Of falling torrents,
Flitted The Gleam.

v.

Down from the mountain
And over the level,
And streaming and shining on
Silent river,
Silvery willow,
Pasture and plowland,
Innocent maidens,
Garrulous children,
Homestead and harvest,
Reaper and gleaner,
And rough-ruddy faces
Of lowly labour,
Slided The Gleam—

VI.

Then, with a melody
Stronger and statelier,
Led me at length
To the city and palace
Of Arthur the king;
Touch'd at the golden
Cross of the churches,
Flash'd on the Tournament,
Flicker'd and bicker'd
From helmet to helmet,
And last on the forehead
Of Arthur the blameless
Rested The Gleam.

VII.

Clouds and darkness
Closed upon Camelot;
Arthur had vanish'd
I knew not whither,
The king who loved me,
And cannot die;
For out of the darkness
Silent and slowly
The Gleam, that had waned to a wintry
glimmer

On icy fallow
And faded forest,
Drew to the valley
Named of the shadow,
And slowly brightening
Out of the glimmer,
And slowly moving again to a melody
Yearningly tender,
Fell on the shadow,
No longer a shadow,
But clothed with The Gleam.

VIII.

And broader and brighter
The Gleam flying onward,
Wed to the melody,
Sang thro' the world;
And slower and fainter,
Old and weary,
But eager to follow,
I saw, whenever
In passing it glanced upon
Hamlet or city,
That under the Crosses
The dead man's garden,
The mortal hillock,

Would break into blossom;
And so to the land's
Last limit I came——
And can no longer,
But die rejoicing,
For thro' the Magic
Of Him the Mighty,
Who taught me in childhood,
There on the border
Of boundless Ocean,
And all but in Heaven
Hovers The Gleam.

IX.

Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Not of the starlight!
O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow The Gleam.

ROMNEY'S REMORSE.

'I read Hayley's Life of Romney the other day—Romney wanted but education and reading to make him a very fine painter; but his ideal was not high nor fixed. How touching is the close of his life! He married at nineteen, and because Sir Joshua and others had said that "marriage spoilt an artist" almost immediately left his wife in the North and scarce saw her till the end of his life; when old, nearly mad and quite desolate, he went back to her and she received him and nursed him till he died. This quiet act of hers is worth all Romney's pictures! even as a matter of Art, I am sure.' (*Letters and Literary Remains of Edward Fitzgerald*, vol. i.)

'BEAT, little heart—I give you this and this'
Who are you? What! the Lady Hamilton?
Good, I am never weary painting you.
To sit once more? Cassandra, Hebe, Joan,
Or spinning at your wheel beside the vine—
Bacchante, what you will; and if I fail
To conjure and concentrate into form
And colour all you are, the fault is less
In me than Art. What Artist ever yet
Could make pure light live on the canvas? Art!
Why should I so disrelish that short word?

Where am I? snow on all the hills! so hot,
So fever'd! never colt would more delight
To roll himself in meadow grass than I
To wallow in that winter of the hills.
Nurse, were you hired? or came of your own will
To wait on one so broken, so forlorn?
Have I not met you somewhere long ago?
I am all but sure I have—in Kendal church—
O yes! I hired you for a season there,
And then we parted; but you look so kind
That you will not deny my sultry throat
One draught of icy water. There—you spill
The drops upon my forehead. Your hand shakes.
I am ashamed. I am a trouble to you,
Could kneel for your forgiveness. Are they tears?
For me—they do me too much grace—for me?
O Mary, Mary!
Vexing you with words!
Words only, born of fever, or the fumes
Of that dark opiate dose you gave me,—words,
Wild babble. I have stumbled back again
Into the common day, the sounder self.
God stay me there, if only for your sake,
The truest, kindliest, noblest-hearted wife
That ever wore a Christian marriage-ring.
My curse upon the Master's apothegm,
That wife and children drag an Artist down!

This seem'd my lodestar in the Heaven of Art,
And lured me from the household fire on earth.
To you my days have been a life-long lie,
Grafted on half a truth; and tho' you say
'Take comfort you have won the Painter's fame,'
The best in me that sees the worst in me,
And groans to see it, finds no comfort there.
What fame? I am not Raphaël, Titian—no
Nor even a Sir Joshua, some will cry.
Wrong there! The painter's fame? but mine, that grew
Blown into glittering by the popular breath,
May float awhile beneath the sun, may roll
The rainbow hues of heaven about it—
There!
The colour'd bubble bursts above the abyss
Of Darkness, utter Lethe.

Is it so?
Her sad eyes plead for my own fame with me
To make it dearer.

Look, the sun has risen
To flame along another dreary day.
Your hand. How bright you keep your marriage-ring!
Raise me. I thank you.

Has your opiate then
Bred this black mood? or am I conscious, more
Than other Masters, of the chasm between
Work and Ideal? Or does the gloom of Age
And suffering cloud the height I stand upon
Even from myself? stand? stood . . . no more.
And yet
The world would lose, if such a wife as you
Should vanish unrecorded. Might I crave
One favour? I am bankrupt of all claim
On your obedience, and my strongest wish
Falls flat before your least unwillingness.
Still would you—if it please you—sit to me?
I dream'd last night of that clear summer noon,
When seated on a rock, and foot to foot
With your own shadow in the placid lake,
You claspt our infant daughter, heart to heart.
I had been among the hills, and brought you down
A length of staghorn-moss, and this you twined
About her cap. I see the picture yet,
Mother and child. A sound from far away,
No louder than a bee among the flowers,
A fall of water lull'd the noon asleep.
You still'd it for the moment with a song
Which often echo'd in me, while I stood
Before the great Madonna-masterpieces
Of ancient Art in Paris, or in Rome.

Mary, my crayons! if I can, I will.
You should have been—I might have made you once,
Had I but known you as I know you now—
The true Alcestis of the time. Your song—
Sit, listen! I remember it, a proof
That I—even I—at times remember'd *you.*

'Beat upon mine, little heart! beat, beat!
Beat upon mine! you are mine, my sweet!
All mine from your pretty blue eyes to your feet,
My sweet.'

Less profile! turn to me—three-quarter face.

'Sleep, little blossom, my honey, my bliss!
For I give you this, and I give you this!
And I blind your pretty blue eyes with a kiss!
Sleep!'

Too early blinded by the kiss of death—

'Father and Mother will watch you grow'—

You watch'd not I, she did not grow, she died.

'Father and Mother will watch you grow,
And gather the roses whenever they blow,
And find the white heather wherever you go,
My sweet.'

Ah, my white heather only blooms in heaven
With Milton's amaranth. There, there, there! a child

Had shamed me at it—Down, you idle tools,
Stampt into dust—tremulous, all awry,
Blurr'd like a landskip in a ruffled pool,—
Not one stroke firm. This Art, that harlot-like
Seduced me from you, leaves me harlot-like,
Who love her still, and whimper, impotent
To win her back before I die—and then—
Then, in the loud world's bastard judgment-day,
One truth will damn me with the mindless mob,
Who feel no touch of my temptation, more
Than all the myriad lies, that blacken round
The corpse of every man that gains a name;
'This model husband, this fine Artist'! Fool,
What matters? Six foot deep of burial mould
Will dull their comments! Ay, but when the shout
Of His descending peals from Heaven, and throbs
Thro' earth, and all her graves, if *He* should ask
'Why left you wife and children? for my sake,
According to my word?' and I replied
'Nay, Lord, for *Art*,' why, that would sound so mean
That all the dead, who wait the doom of Hell
For bolder sins than mine, adulteries,
Wife-murders,—nay, the ruthless Mussulman
Who flings his bowstrung Harem in the sea,
Would turn, and glare at me, and point and jeer,
And gibber at the worm, who, living, made

The wife of wives a widow-bride, and lost
Salvation for a sketch.
I am wild again!
The coals of fire you heap upon my head
Have crazed me. Someone knocking there without?
No! Will my Indian brother come? to find
Me or my coffin? Should I know the man?
This worn-out Reason dying in her house
May leave the windows blinded, and if so,
Bid him farewell for me, and tell him—
Hope!
I hear a death-bed Angel whisper 'Hope.'
"The miserable have no medicine
But only Hope!" He said it . . . in the play.
His crime was of the senses; of the mind
Mine; worse, cold, calculated.
Tell my son—
O let me lean my head upon your breast.
'Beat little heart' on this fool brain of mine.
I once had friends—and many—none like you.
I love you more than when we married. Hope!
O yes, I hope, or fancy that, perhaps,
Human forgiveness touches heaven, and thence—
For you forgive me, you are sure of that—
Reflected, sends a light on the forgiven.

PARNASSUS.

Exegi monumentum . . .
Quod non . . .
Possit diruere . . .
. . . innumerabilis
Annorum series et fuga temporum.—HORACE.

I.

WHAT be those crown'd forms high over the sacred fountain?
Bards, that the mighty Muses have raised to the heights of the mountain,
And over the flight of the Ages! O Goddesses, help me up thither!
Lightning may shrivel the laurel of Cæsar, but mine would not wither.
Steep is the mountain, but you, you will help me to overcome it,
And stand with my head in the zenith, and roll my voice from the summit,
Sounding for ever and ever thro' Earth and her listening nations,
And mixt with the great Sphere-music of stars and of constellations.

II.

What be those two shapes high over the sacred fountain,
Taller than all the Muses, and huger than all the mountain?
On those two known peaks they stand ever spreading and heightening;
Poet, that evergreen laurel is blasted by more than lightning!
Look, in their deep double shadow the crown'd ones all disappearing!
Sing like a bird and be happy, nor hope for a deathless hearing!
'Sounding for ever and ever?' pass on! the sight confuses—
These are Astronomy and Geology, terrible Muses!

III.

If the lips were touch'd with fire from off a pure Pierian altar,
Tho' their music here be mortal need the singer greatly care?
Other songs for other worlds! the fire within him would not falter;
Let the golden Iliad vanish, Homer here is Homer there.

BY AN EVOLUTIONIST.

THE Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man,
And the man said 'Am I your debtor?'
And the Lord—'Not yet: but make it as clean as you can,
And then I will let you a better.'

I.

If my body come from brutes, my soul uncertain, or a fable,
Why not bask amid the senses while the sun of morning shines,
I, the finer brute rejoicing in my hounds, and in my stable,
Youth and Health, and birth and wealth, and choice of women and of wines?

II.

What hast thou done for me, grim Old Age, save breaking my bones on the rack?

Would I had past in the morning that looks so
bright from afar!

OLD AGE.

Done for thee? starved the wild beast that was linkt
with thee eighty years back.
Less weight now for the ladder-of-heaven that hangs
on a star.

I.

If my body come from brutes, tho' somewhat finer
than their own,
I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal
voice be mute?
No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the
throne,
Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy Prov-
ince of the brute.

II.

I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a
field in the Past,
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs
of a low desire,
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet
at last
As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse
of a height that is higher.

FAR—FAR—AWAY.

(FOR MUSIC.)

WHAT sight so lured him thro' the fields he knew
As where earth's green stole into heaven's own hue,
Far—far—away?

What sound was dearest in his native dells?
The mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells
Far—far—away.

What vague world-whisper, mystic pain or joy,
Thro' those three words would haunt him when a boy,
Far—far—away?

A whisper from his dawn of life? a breath
From some fair dawn beyond the doors of death
Far—far—away?

Far, far, how far? from o'er the gates of Birth,
The faint horizons, all the bounds of earth,
Far—far—away?

What charm in words, a charm no words could give?
O dying words, can Music make you live
Far—far—away?

POLITICS.

We move, the wheel must always move,
Nor always on the plain,
And if we move to such a goal
As Wisdom hopes to gain,
Then you that drive, and know your Craft,
Will firmly hold the rein,
Nor lend an ear to random cries,
Or you may drive in vain,
For some cry 'Quick' and some cry 'Slow,'
But, while the hills remain,
Up hill 'Too-slow' will need the whip,
Down hill 'Too-quick,' the chain.

BEAUTIFUL CITY.

BEAUTIFUL city, the centre and crater of
European confusion,
O you with your passionate shriek for the rights
of an equal humanity,
How often your Re-volution has proven but
E-volution
Roll'd again back on itself in the tides of
a civic insanity!

THE ROSES ON THE TERRACE.

Rose, on this terrace fifty years ago,
When I was in my June, you in your May,
Two words, '*My* Rose' set all your face aglow,
And now that I am white, and you are gray,
That blush of fifty years ago, my dear,
Blooms in the Past, but close to me to-day
As this red rose, which on our terrace here
Glows in the blue of fifty miles away.

THE PLAY.

Act first, this Earth, a stage so gloom'd with woe
You all but sicken at the shifting scenes.
And yet be patient. Our Playwright may show
In some fifth Act what this wild Drama means.

ON ONE WHO AFFECTED AN EFFEMINATE MANNER.

WHILE man and woman still are incomplete,
I prize that soul where man and woman meet,
Which types all Nature's male and female plan
But, friend, man-woman is not woman-man.

TO ONE WHO RAN DOWN THE ENGLISH.

YOU make our faults too gross, and thence maintain
Our darker future. May your fears be vain!
At times the small black fly upon the pane
May seem the black ox of the distant plain.

THE SNOWDROP.

MANY, many welcomes
February fair-maid,
Ever as of old time,
Solitary firstling,
Coming in the cold time,
Prophet of the gay time,
Prophet of the May time,
Prophet of the roses,
Many, many welcomes
February fair-maid!

THE THROSTLE.

'SUMMER is coming, summer is coming.
I know it, I know it, I know it.
Light again, leaf again, life again, love again,'
Yes, my wild little Poet.

Sing the new year in under the blue.
Last year you sang it as gladly.
'New, new, new, new'! Is it then *so* new
That you should carol so madly?

'Love again, song again, nest again, young again,'
Never a prophet so crazy!
And hardly a daisy as yet, little friend,
See, there is hardly a daisy.

'Here again, here, here, here, happy year'!
O warble unchidden, unbidden!
Summer is coming, is coming, my dear,
And all the winters are hidden.

THE OAK.

Live thy Life,
Young and old,
Like yon oak,
Bright in spring,
Living gold;

Summer-rich
Then; and then
Autumn-changed,
Soberer-hued
Gold again.

All his leaves
Fall'n at length,
Look, he stands,
Trunk and bough,
Naked strength.